Yarborough

SELECT SERMONS

On some of the most

IMPORTANT POINTS

OF THE

Christian Religion.

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PREFACE.

IT would be needleſs to make any Apology for offering the following Diſcourſes to the World. The Eaſineſs of the Style, and the Clearneſs of the Method, ſufficiently ſhews them to be the genuine Works of the Author, whoſe Name is prefixed to them. They are upon ſome of the moſt important and intereſting Points of Chriſtianity, with regard both to Faith and Practice. There evidently appears in them all, a moſt warm and pious Zeal, for the great Articles of our holy Religion, and a moſt affectionate Earneſtneſs in inculcating the Virtues and Duties of the Chriſtian Life, and raiſing

the true Spirit of Devotion, Humility, and Charity. And yet there is nothing in them like any Taint of Enthusiasm, or the least bordering upon Extravagance. This surely is the best Character and Recommendation of Compositions of this Nature: And this, we trust, will intitle those, which follow, to the Favour and Approbation of all candid and serious Readers.

In the Sermon on *Whit-Sunday* is a Text or two of Scripture differently interpreted from the common Way, in which the Generality of Men of Learning have understood them. The Editor did not think himself at Liberty to make any Alterations in these Cases. He leaves them to the Judgment and Consideration of Scholars. If they should

ſhould not be found ſatisfactory, they are at leaſt innocent. They are not contrived to maintain or ſupport any new Doctrines or Schemes whatever. Nay they are applied to the farther Defence and Proof of ſome Points of That *Faith, which was once* for all *delivered to the Saints*, at the Beginning of Chriſtianity, and which therefore we ought to hold faſt, pure and undefiled, to the End of the World.

Dr. BUNDY was generally allowed, even by the beſt Judges who heard him, to be a very pleaſing and agreeable, as well as a very uſeful and inſtructive Preacher. And though none of his Sermons were compoſed for the Preſs; yet the two Volumes which were publiſhed ſoon after his Death, have

met with a moſt kind and favourable Reception in the World, and are ſtill thought to deſerve a Place among the many judicious and excellent Diſcourſes which are printed, and which are an Honour to our Church and Nation.—This, as well as the Opinion and Solicitations of many Perſons of Judgment, eaſily prevailed upon the Proprietor to publiſh likewiſe thoſe contained in this Volume; which he is encouraged to hope will merit the ſame Regard, be as agreeable to the Author's Friends and Admirers, and be read with equal Pleaſure and Improvement.

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THE

NATURE and EXCELLENCY

OF THE

Knowledge of *Jesus Christ*,

And Him crucified.

Preached on GOOD-FRIDAY.

B

The Nature and Excellency of the Knowledge of JESUS CHRIST, and him crucified.

SERMON I.

1 COR. ii. 2.

I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

THE Sufferings of the Son of God in His human Nature are, without controversy, the most noble, the most comfortable, the most affecting, and the most useful Subject, upon which the Mind of Man can be employed. The most *noble*, as they are a most stupendous Instance of divine Goodness, and display the Wonders of infinite Love; as they unfold and explain the great and most remarkable Dispensations of Providence, from the Beginning of Time; and as they open those Mysteries concerning the Nature of God, and the Redemption of Man;

which were *kept ſecret from the Foundations of the World*, and were never clearly made known and underſtood, till thoſe Sufferings had been undergone. The moſt *comfortable*, as they raiſe us from the Gloom and Horrors of Guilt, to the Chearfulneſs and Joy of Innocence and Hope. The moſt *affecting*, as they demonſtrate the Miſery of fallen Man, and the fatal Effects of Sin, in the ſtrongeſt and moſt awakening Views. And the moſt *uſeful*, in that they are ſo productive of good Works, in every Light; that it is impoſſible for any faithful Chriſtian to reflect ſeriouſly and attentively upon them, without being the better for ſuch Reflections.

And theſe may be ſome of the Reaſons, which rouzed St. *Paul*'s Zeal, and made him not only ſum up the whole of Chriſtianity in the Knowledge of our Lord's Perſon and Paſſion; but, likewiſe, extol, and prefer it before all the Learning and Wiſdom of the World: *I determined not to know any thing among you, ſave Jeſus Chriſt, and Him crucified.* That is, this was the Subſtance of my preaching among you;

you; and these Doctrines far excel the Wisdom of the Wise, and all the Subtleties and Learning of the Philosopher. Now this Declaration of the zealous Apostle naturally leads us,

I. To consider, what it is, to know *Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.* And

II. To shew the Excellency of that Knowledge.

I. The first thing is, to consider, what it is *to know Jesus Christ, and Him crucified*; which Knowledge contains under it these Particulars, 1. To know the Dignity of His Person. 2. The Nature of His Sufferings. And, 3. The Merits and Efficacy of His Sacrifice and Atonement.

1. The first thing implied in this Knowledge, is the Dignity of His Person. It is not enough to acknowledge the Excellency of His Doctrines, and the Integrity of His Life, unless we likewise believe Him to be the Eternal Son of God. He may have been a Prophet sent from God, as many others had been before Him, and yet have

fallen very ſhort of the Title and Character here given Him by our Apoſtle. His Name, *Jeſus*, implies His being the Saviour of the World, which the Old Teſtament appropriates to God Himſelf, who has there declared, *there is no Saviour beſides Me* [a]. And His being *Chriſt*, or the *Meſſiah*, implies His being the Perſon prefigured and foretold in the Law and the Prophets; and His fully anſwering to the Types and Deſcriptions, which had been given of that *Meſſiah*. But this, alſo, no mere Man could do; the Pomp and Solemnity of the many Millions of Sacrifices and Types, which God Himſelf had appointed, to prepare the Way for His Appearance in the World, ſeem too great an Honour for any Creature: And, farther, it was expreſly foretold, that His *Name ſhould be Wonderful, Counſellor, the Mighty God, the Everlaſting Father, the Prince of Peace.*

His being *Jeſus*, or a *Saviour*, implies His having appeaſed the Wrath of God, ſatisfied his Divine Juſtice, repaired the Decays of human Nature, reconciled rebellious Men to their offended God, and purchaſed

[a] Hoſ. xiii. 4. (ſee Iſa. xliii. 3, 11. xlv. 21. Luke i. 47.)

eternal

eternal Salvation for them. What Mortal, then, or what Creature, how much exalted soever in Dignity, could be sufficient for these things? Has not every Creature its own Debt of Obedience to pay, beyond which it cannot go? Can the most exact Obedience for the future, make Satisfaction for one past Transgression? Or could the Death of a Man discharge more than his own Debt to the Law? What, then, could be sufficient to expiate the Guilt of Millions, re-instate them in the Favour of God, and satisfy His Justice? Nothing less, as far as we can judge from the Scriptures, than the Humiliation and Sufferings of the Eternal *Logos, who made all things, and by whom all things consist.* And to know *Jesus Christ*, then, as the Saviour of the World, is to know, that He *was with God, and was God*; left the Bosom of His Father, and took upon Him the Form of a Servant, in order to fulfil the Law of God for us, to confirm the Promises of His Father, and to justify us in His Sight, by bearing our Iniquities.

Whether infinite Wisdom could not have found out some other Method of Atonement, which to us would not seem so

ſtrange; and whether infinite Mercy could not have forgiven us, without any; it may ſeem highly daring and preſumptuous to determine. But, nevertheleſs, ſo far as we can reaſon from what is delivered to us in holy Writ, the Fact itſelf ſtrongly implies the Wiſdom and Propriety, if not the Neceſſity, of this Method. That in our Bleſſed Redeemer *dwelt all the Fulneſs of the Godhead bodily*, the Apoſtle aſſerts; that God the Father required of Him what He did and ſuffered for us, is evident from hence; that He ſent Him into the World for that Purpoſe; and it is plain alſo from the Nature of the thing. If God did not require it, His Humiliation was ſo far vain, that it might have been omitted; and if God did require it, His Command ſeems unanſwerably to imply, that the End, which was Man's Redemption, could not have been, conſiſtently with His own Attributes, and the Honour of His Laws, ſo well anſwered without it. Becauſe, according to all the Notions we can form of Juſtice, as it is unjuſt in the Perſon *offended*, to demand more than is his due, by way of Satisfaction; ſo is it in the Perſon *offending*, to pay leſs. As, then, God did demand the Incarna-

tion

tion and Sufferings of His Eternal Son, we may conclude, that that Atonement was necessary, or, at least, most proper; and we can think of no other Method, which could so surely take away the Sins of the World.

2. The Nature of His Sufferings is the second Thing to be considered, in order to *know* Him: which Sufferings I need not recapitulate to you; nor can I, without falling infinitely short of that noble Plainness and Simplicity, with which they are related by the Evangelists. The public Devotions of the Week have already led you through all the last Part of them, which are more eminently styled His *Passion*; and you have more than once attended the Blessed *Jesus* from His last Paschal Supper, to His Resignation of His Spirit to His Father, on the accursed Tree. And, therefore, all I shall observe on this Head, will only be, to desire you to recollect the Ignominy and Shame of His Sufferings; the Treachery and Cowardice of His Disciples; and His ineffable Conflict, both in the Garden, and on the Cross, when borne down with the insupportable Weight of the Sins of Mankind.

Shame

Shame and Reproach affect great and generous Minds in the ſtrongeſt Manner. To be expoſed to the Inſults and Revilings of a Multitude; to be ſet up as a Gazing-ſtock for an incenſed Rabble, to be laughed at by the Vain and Fooliſh, and inſulted by the moſt cruel and inhuman Enemies, have ever been deemed, by Men of the greateſt Spirits, a much more intolerable Puniſhment than the Loſs of Life. This was too much for the boaſted Bravery and Conſtancy of a *Cato*, or a *Brutus*, to bear, even for their Country. It was a Maxim among theſe pretended Heroes, rather to murder themſelves, than be thus expoſed. Which ſeems to imply the mighty Pain and Anguiſh of ſuch Sufferings; though it is very little to the Credit of their pretended Patriotiſm or Courage. But nothing of this kind was too much for the Son of God to undergo, for the Sake of the vileſt and moſt wicked Part of Mankind. He was reproached, buffeted, ſpit upon, and openly ſcourged; inſulted with the mock Majeſty of a King, and crowned with Thorns; led through an inſolent Crowd of Enemies to the common Place of Execution; where He expired like a

Slave

Slave on a Croſs, amidſt the Revilings of His ſuppoſed Fellow Criminal, and the Tauntings of thoſe that paſs'd by. And yet, in all *theſe Scenes of reviling, He reviled not again; He was led as a Lamb to the Slaughter, and opened not His Mouth*, but to implore Pardon and Mercy for thoſe that reviled Him, and even for His Murderers themſelves. Wonderful Conſtancy, and mighty Love! ſuch as no Man ever had for his Friend or his Country; and ſuch as muſt awaken every tender, pious, and grateful Sentiment in our Minds, if we conſider, that we are the Perſons for whom He *thus* ſuffered.

Again; it was no ſmall Aggravation of our Bleſſed Lord's Sufferings, that they were introduced by Treachery, and accompanied with Ingratitude, on the Part of His Diſciples. It was the Man whom He had highly favoured, who had not only ſeen His Miracles, and heard His divine Diſcourſes, but was alſo honoured above his Fellow-Diſciples in being appointed to bear the Purſe for them; it was he, who delivered up his Maſter to His Enemies. And that nothing might be wanting to complete the Treachery, he ſtill aſſumed the Appearance

of Affection and Friendſhip, and betrays Him by a known Mark and Token of it: Which drew from the meek and humble *Jeſus*, that gentle, but that moſt piercing Rebuke, *Judas, betrayeſt thou the Son of Man with a Kiſs?* It was the ſanguine *Peter* who denied Him with Oaths and Imprecations in His own Preſence; it was His beloved Diſciple *John*, who had lain in His Boſom, but a few Hours before, that no ſooner ſaw Him ſeized, but *with the reſt forſook Him and fled.* And theſe, in the Eſtimation of the Pſalmiſt, muſt have been bitter Ingredients in His Cup of Affliction, that *it was not His open Enemies* only *that did Him Diſhonour*; but He was ungratefully rejected and diſowned by His *Companions*, His Diſciples, and thoſe whom He honoured with the Treatment and Appellation of His own *familiar Friends. He, who did eat of His Bread, laid great wait for Him*; they, who had *taken ſweet Counſel with Him*, and with whom He had walked *in the Houſe of God as Friends*, ſhamefully deſerted and denied Him.

Nevertheleſs it muſt be owned, that Ingratitude, though very grievous to a Mind in

in Diſtreſs, is no uncommon Vice. But the laſt Circumſtance I would deſire you to recollect is, what no Man ever ſuffered but Himſelf, the agonizing Conflict of His Soul with God, both in the Garden, and on the Croſs. This was peculiar to the meek and patient *Jeſus*; and in this Inſtance it is eaſy to conceive, that never *was any Sorrow like unto His Sorrow.* Serious Reflections on the Ingratitude, Baſeneſs, and other enormous Aggravations of our own Sins only, were enough (if the Comforts of Religion did not intervene) to ſink any of us into the inexpreſſible Horrors and Miſeries of Deſpair; and yet *the Lord then laid on Him the Iniquities of us all.* What Idea then can we form of the Preſſure that muſt lie upon Him, when ſtruggling with a juſt Senſe of the Weight of the Sins of the whole World, and His Father's Anger and impending Vengeance? The Evangeliſts themſelves attempt not to deſcribe it; but leave us to judge of it by ſuch Circumſtances, as ſhew it to have been inexpreſſible. What Words can repreſent thoſe Tortures of Mind, which were great enough, in a manner,

manner, to diſſolve His Body, and drive out His Blood thro' His Pores, in great Quantities? Who can deſcribe that Anguiſh and Sorrow of Heart, which could reduce Him ſo low, as to need the Aſſiſtance of an Angel, to comfort Him? How aſtoniſhing muſt have been the Horrors, I had almoſt ſaid, the Deſpondency of His Soul, which could extort from Him that great and exceeding bitter Cry, *My God, my God, why haſt Thou forſaken me?* So great were the Sufferings, ſo wonderful the Love of the Son of God, for us miſerable Sinners. From which we paſs on,

3. Thirdly, To the Merits and Efficacy of His Atonement. This is a neceſſary Part of the Knowledge of *Jeſus Chriſt, and Him crucified*; without this, we are ſtill as far from Reſt and Peace as ever; ſince, in that Caſe, His Sufferings are no greater Matter of Comfort to us, than thoſe of His Apoſtles or Martyrs; as to us, they were undergone in vain. And therefore the ſacred Writings are moſt expreſs and clear in aſſerting the perfect Innocence and exact Obedience of our Great Mediator, the ineſtimable Merit of the Price which He paid for us, and the Powers which have

have been given Him ſince His Exaltation: They teach us, that he was pure and *without Sin*, and *did always thoſe Things that pleaſed the Father*; that His Sacrifice was ſufficient to *take away the Sins of the* whole *World*, and therefore *God laid on Him the Iniquities of us all*; and that He has now *received Power of the Father* over all Fleſh, *is able to ſave them to the uttermoſt that come unto God by Him*, and is *become the Author of eternal Salvation to all them that obey Him*. In point of Reaſon, nothing more ſeems neceſſary to complete a vicarious Sacrifice, wherein one Perſon is ſubſtituted to ſuffer in the room of another, than the Acceptance of the Perſon offended, the Conſent of the Perſon ſuffering, and the Sufficiency of the Puniſhment to ſatisfy the Juſtice and vindicate the Honour of the Lawgiver, whoſe Authority had been affronted, and his Laws broken. And all theſe Particulars were plainly united in the Great Author of our Redemption. The Acceptance of God the Father, who was the Perſon offended, cannot be doubted, ſince we know, that He *ſent His only begotten Son into the World to be the Propitiation for our Sins,— that we might live through Him.*

The

The Consent of our suffering Lord is most evident, since no Man could take His Life from Him, *but He laid it down of Himself.* And in what other Manner could the Almighty display His Abhorrence of Sin, and vindicate the Honour of His Laws, so fully, so surprizingly, so terribly; as in the Agonies and Death of His beloved Son, *who was the express Image of His own Person?* Which being considered, it will necessarily follow, that His most gracious Purpose, in coming among us, has been fully answered; and that *He has* perfectly *reconciled us to God by His Cross.* And this likewise sufficiently shews the just grounds our Apostle *St. Paul* had to cry out in transport, upon the contemplation of this, *O the Depth of the Riches of the Goodness of God!* and to declare with his usual Zeal and Fervency to his *Corinthians*, *That* he *determined to know nothing among them, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.* Which leads me to the

II. Second general Head proposed, which was to shew the Excellency of this Knowledge. And here it were very easy to expatiate

tiate largely, and in drawing a Parallel between the ſeveral Parts of divine and human Knowledge; to ſhew, by an Induction of many Particulars, the Uncertainty, Defects, and Precarioufneſs of the one, and the Certainty, Sufficiency, and Infallibility of the other. But ſuch a long and laboured Diſſertation would ill become this Place and Time, which will only allow me to obſerve, that we may be ſufficiently ſatisfied of the Wiſdom of knowing *Chriſt crucified*, if we only conſider the Extent, the Importance, and the Uſefulneſs of that Knowledge.

Much has been ſaid to extol and magnify thoſe Parts of human Learning, which are ſaid to open and enlarge the Mind, and to give it the moſt copious and comprehenſive Views; and this, no doubt, muſt be allowed to be juſt matter of Commendation, wherever the Subject deſerves it. But, alas! how narrow and contracted are all our Arts and Sciences, when compared with the boundleſs Scenes that are opened to us, in the Doctrines that relate to the Oeconomy of Man's Redemption! Theſe lead us to a more profound Knowledge of

the Wiſdom, Power, and Goodneſs of God; give us better and fuller Sentiments of the Nature and State of our own Souls; and comprehend all the various Diſpenſations of Providence, from the Foundation of the World. They, indeed, inform us of many wonderful things; but theſe are Wonders of Love; ſuch as muſt warm and captivate the Heart, as well as enlarge the Underſtanding. They open to us the Secrets of Heaven; lead us back to the Decrees of God, before the Heavens and the Earth were made; and carry us forwards to the Employment of future numberleſs Ages, when Time ſhall be no more. They teach us ſome Myſteries of the Divine Nature; ſolve ſome of thoſe Difficulties which are moſt inexplicable in Nature and Reaſon, ſuch as the Origin of Evil; and give us the plaineſt Accounts of what we are, whence we came, and whither we are going. And how poor, then, and contemptible, how low and dark, are all our Sciences, when compared with this Light which ſhines down to us from Heaven! How little better than Folly and Vanity itſelf, are our boaſted Attainments, when weighed

weighed in the Balance with the true Knowledge of *Jesus Christ, and* Him *crucified!*

Again; another Particular, which ſhould recommend this Knowledge to us, is the Importance of it. It is not vouchſafed us barely for our Amuſement, or Diverſion, during our ſhort Continuance upon Earth; but is deſigned for the inexhauſtible Subject of our Praiſes and Thankſgivings, to all Eternity. Beſides, it has been Matter of Complaint to ſome, who have gone fartheſt in the Search and Attainment of human Learning; that after all their Reach and Penetration, their chief Diſcovery has been that of their own Ignorance; and the chief Effect, a perpetual Reſtleſſneſs of Deſire, and impatient Thirſt after more. Whereas the Truths conveyed to us by Revelation are not ſublime only, but ſatisfactory. The Mind has here a firm Baſis to rely upon; it can with Confidence acquieſce in the Declarations of unerring Wiſdom; and it will find enough in theſe Fountains of Knowledge, to ſatisfy and content it. Whatever is neceſſary to our Peace and Satisfaction, is here, and here

only, to be found: And ſurely, it can be no ſmall Recommendation of theſe divine Truths to thoſe who would learn Wiſdom, that our Happineſs and Miſery do greatly depend on our Application to them. Whether we will hear, or whether we will forbear; this is certain, that *there is no other Name*, no other Knowledge, *under Heaven, whereby we may be ſaved, but only that of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt:* And what more can be ſaid to ſhew the Wiſdom of St. *Paul's* Preference in the Text, after this Aſſurance, from our Saviour Himſelf, *That to know the Father, and Jeſus Chriſt, whom He has ſent, is Life eternal?*

Laſtly, The Excellence of this Knowledge may ſtill farther appear, as from the Extent and Importance, ſo likewiſe from the Uſefulneſs of it. It was not given us to increaſe our Vanity, or nurture Pride, but to make us wiſer and better Men. And theſe Effects it cannot fail of producing in thoſe, who ſincerely believe and attentively conſider it. Every Chriſtian Doctrine, when duly weighed, naturally tends to produce or cultivate ſome Chriſtian Grace; in ſo much that it ſeems impoſſible for the Mind

Mind to dwell long on any Part of the Christian Scheme, without being improved and reformed by it. To look back and meditate on what God has decreed and done for fallen Man, must awaken every pious and grateful Sentiment in the Soul, and melt down the most stubborn and obdurate Heart into Acts of Adoration and Love. To take a View of the Life of the Blessed *Jesus*, and mark the Virtues that shine forth in it, His Meekness and Condescension, His Forbearance and Long-suffering, and His Immense Goodness and boundless Love for His Creatures, who gave Him the worst Treatment, must constrain all sincere Believers, to resolve to be, for His sake, more mild and gentle, more humane and beneficent, to all their fellow Servants for the future. And who can attend Him through His last most doleful Scene, and view His Sorrows and Sufferings, without an Humility of Soul not to be described; without a real Abhorrence of themselves for past Offences; and without the most passionate Resolves not to crucify Him afresh, by repeating their Transgressions?

So excellent is the Knowledge of *Jesus Christ, and Him crucified*; so noble and sublime its Subject; so important its Truths; and so productive of Virtue and Piety in us, in all its Branches. From all which I would at present draw only one Inference, and that is,

The *Necessity* of *Believing*. Nothing, indeed, can supersede the Obligation of the moral Law, which is allowed to be of eternal Duration; that is, which will always oblige, as long as we continue in the same Relations to God, and to one another. And therefore it is allowed, that too much cannot well be said of the Excellency and Use of the Precepts of what is called Natural Religion; nor can the Necessity of their Observance be too often and too warmly inculcated, if considered only in themselves, and not as exclusive of other Duties. Christianity has established them on the firmest Basis; and our modern Advocates for the Moral System, in Opposition to, or *Derogation* from, the Divine, must (if they will act consistently with their Pretences) retain a great *Veneration* and *Esteem* at least for the Gospel, which has given us the only

ly perfect Scheme of moral Laws, and bound them upon us by Sanctions of infinitely greater Force, than the Reason or Authority of Man could devise. But, nevertheless, the Preachers of the Gospel *may*, and *ought*, with great Boldness to insist, that in Religion there are other Duties, which are, at least, of equal Necessity and Obligation with the moral; and such is the Belief in a crucified Saviour. This is as much a Duty, that is, is as much a Command of Almighty God, as any Precept in the Decalogue; and, I might add, is as necessary for a well-grounded Peace and Quiet of Mind, as Morality is for the good Order and Government of the World. As *without Holiness no Man shall see*, so *without Faith it is impossible to please, the Lord.* The Promises of Forgiveness here, and eternal Life hereafter, are Matters of divine Revelation only; and by that Revelation confined to those alone, who believe the Truths, as well as obey the Precepts, of it. Nothing can be more clear than the Words of the *Baptist: He that believeth not the Son, shall not see Life, but the Wrath of God abideth on him.* To magnify, then, the

Duties of Morality to so high a Degree, as to supersede, or invalidate, the Necessity of a divine Faith, is to undermine the strongest Foundation on which it can be placed; as, on the other hand, to carry the Efficacy of a barren Faith so far, as to derogate from our Obligation to good Works, is to make the holy Scriptures contradict themselves, and to slacken our Pursuit after that Holiness which they most strongly enforce. The Son of God, on Whom we depend for our Title to our Inheritance, has declared *both* necessary; and, for ought appears to the contrary, *equally so*, with regard to such as may come to the Knowlege of the Truth; since He has assured us, that the *Unbeliever* and *the wicked Steward* shall have their Portion together, where *there shall be weeping, and gnashing of Teeth.* Let us, then, *hold fast the Profession of our Faith, without wavering*; and let us stedfastly adhere to the salutary Doctrine of a crucified Saviour, in Whom alone we can hope for Sanctification and Redemption; as well knowing, that *other* true *Foundation* for Peace and Happiness *can no Man lay, than what is laid*, which is *Jesus Christ.*

THE

THE EVIDENCE, ADVANTAGES, AND INFLUENCES OF Our Lord's Resurrection.

Preached on EASTER SUNDAY.

The Evidence, Advantages, and Influences of our Lord's Resurrection.

SERMON II.

1 COR. xv. 17.

If Christ be not raised, your Faith is vain.

OF all the Proofs we have of the divine Authority of our most holy Religion, the plainest and most obvious to every Understanding is that of Miracles; and of all these the most remarkable and most necessary was that of our Blessed Lord's Resurrection from the Dead. This He Himself often foretold; and therefore He could not have appeared to be a true Prophet, if His Predictions had not proved true. To this the Apostles appeal as the Foundation of all their Doctrines, and affirm, that *He was declared*, or proved *to be the Son of God with Power*[a]; by this single Fact of

[a] Rom. i. 4.

the Resurrection from the Dead. He claimed the Appellation of the *Son of God* as His Due, on account of His Divine Birth and Mission, and was put to death for that Pretence; and God's raising Him from the Grave after He had been three Days in it, was therefore undeniably proving to the World that He was that Son of God; and if the Son of God, then an infallible Teacher; and if an infallible Teacher, then must His Doctrines be the Doctrines of God, and His Words *the Words of eternal Life.* Thus does the Evidence of this important Article extend its Force to all others; and therefore *St. Paul* in the Text makes all the Hopes and Expectations of the Church of *Christ* absolutely to depend upon it. After having given an Account (in the Beginning of this Chapter) of those *infallible Signs* and Proofs, whereby it was evident to a Demonstration, that our Lord was risen; he then shews the Folly of rejecting this Doctrine, by considering the fatal Consequences, that must inevitably follow upon the Disbelief of it. Without it, he intimates, that we have no room to hope for Peace or Comfort, either in this Life, or a better: The glorious Promises and

and mighty Privileges, which are annexed to the Chriſtian Faith, muſt all vaniſh into Deluſion, if this be not true; for it will neceſſarily follow, that if *Chriſt be not riſen, ye are yet in your Sins.* If He could not raiſe up Himſelf from the Grave, neither can He raiſe you up from Sin and Corruption; and if not exalt you above the Power of Sin, much leſs can He raiſe your Bodies to Life again ſome Ages hence; and if not raiſe your Bodies, ſtill leſs exalt your Souls to the mighty Privileges He has promiſed His Servants in the Kingdom of His Father. So that if *Chriſt* be not riſen, there can be no Reſurrection of the Dead: You muſt remain for ever in your Graves, the Objects of God's Wrath; and conſequently, *your Faith muſt be vain.* In ſpeaking to theſe Words, therefore, I ſhall

I. Take a ſhort View of the Evidence we have of our Lord's Reſurrection.

II. Mention ſome of the preſent Advantages of it. And

III. Conſider the Influences theſe things ought to have on our Lives and Converſations.

 I. Firſt

I. First then we are to consider the Evidence we have to believe this prime Doctrine of Christianity, that our Lord, according to the Declarations of His Apostles, was raised from Death to Life, after His dead Body had lain for some time in the Grave. And here it must be premised, that this being a Matter of Fact, can admit of no other Proof, than what distant Facts are capable of, that of Testimony; and if the same Proofs are allowed to be good in this Case, which we readily acquiesce in, when urged in Defence of other things of the like Nature; the Evidence we have must appear sufficient to convince the most scrupulous Enquirer, who is not resolutely bent not to be convinced by the most proper Arguments: For the Witnesses of it were plain and illiterate Men, not to be charged with Cunning and Design, and yet very capable of understanding the Truth of the Fact in question. They were very uniform and consistent in all their Accounts of it; They were so far from having any temporal Views, that they gave up all that is esteemed good and valuable by the World, rather than deny it; and

and at the ſame time taught ſuch Doctrines, as implied their being ſubject to eternal Miſery hereafter, if they falſified in it. They were very far from being credulous in this caſe: They refuſed to believe, till they could no longer reſiſt the mighty Force of the Evidences they received for it; but when once convinced, they were immoveable in preaching this ſtrange Doctrine to the World; and gave the laſt Proof of their Sincerity in it, that Man can give, ſealed the Truth of what they ſaid with their Blood. The Apoſtles were, even after the Death of their Lord and Maſter, ignorant of the Scriptures, that He ſhould riſe again from the Dead; tho' He had foretold His Reſurrection to them, they underſtood not the Meaning of His Predictions; but were amazed at the relation of ſo ſtrange an Event, for a time doubted of the Truth of it, and refuſed to give their Aſſent to it, till they were demonſtrably convinced of it by their own Senſes; for the Words of the Women, that reported it, *ſeemed to them as idle Tales, and they believed them not.* And in compliance therefore with theſe Doubts and Scruples, that they might firſt be

be convinced themſelves, and thereby be enabled to convince others, our Lord frequently preſented Himſelf to them after His Reſurrection, converſed many Days with them, and wrought ſeveral Miracles before them. By theſe Means, every Pretence for their Infidelity was anſwered, every Shadow of an Objection removed; that their Faith in Him might be undeniably eſtabliſhed, and that through the Prevalence of ſuch irreſiſtible Conviction, theſe His choſen Meſſengers might thereafter become bold and reſolute in vindicating the Truth of His Reſurrection, whom they had known to be truly dead, and whom after His Death they had ſeen alive. That they might be certified He was really dead, He lay three Days in the Boſom of the Earth; That they might not doubt of His being alive again, He converſed with them forty. That they might be aſſured He had aſſumed a real Body, He breaks Bread, and eats before them; and that they might be ſatisfied this real Body was the ſame that had expired on the Croſs, He complies with the Demands of His unbelieving Diſciple, and bids him *behold in His Hands the Print of the Nails, and put his Finger*

Finger into the Print of the Nails, and thruſt his Hand into His Side. Thus were they themſelves convinced, who are now His Witneſſes unto us, and whoſe Teſtimony cannot juſtly be weakened, either with the Charge of too much Eaſe and Credulity, or with the want of a Capacity to diſcern the Truth. Not with Credulity, becauſe they themſelves, till they could doubt no longer, were faithleſs; not with want of Capacity, becauſe it is thoſe things only, *which they have ſeen and heard*, which they in this caſe *declare unto us*. Every Man is in ſome meaſure a Judge of what he ſees; but nevertheleſs, becauſe the frequent Repetition of the ſame thing, the frequent Appearance of the ſame Object, is ſometimes neceſſary to confirm the Certainty of it; our Lord therefore appeared unto His Diſciples, not once only, but often. And becauſe the Number of the Beholders muſt add Strength to our Opinion, and confirm us beyond all Doubt in the Truth of it, by taking away all Probability of a Deceit; our Lord therefore diſcovers Himſelf not to a few only, but *to Five hundred Brethren at once*. And unleſs therefore we will run into thoſe groſs Abſurdities

of denying the Senſes to be the proper Judges of things ſenſible, and of not allowing the Eye to be capable of diſcerning, or the Hand of feeling the Reality of an Object, frequently and openly both ſeen and felt; unleſs we can imagine this Deception, or Inability of Perception in the Senſes, to be likewiſe very general, and that not one, or a few Perſons only, but Numbers of Men were all at once, and often, thus miſerably infatuated and deceived; we muſt neceſſarily grant, that this mighty Work of our Lord's Reſurrection has all the human Evidence that a diſtant Matter of Fact can poſſibly have; and muſt allow, that *as by Man came Death, ſo by the Son of Man came the Reſurrection of the Dead.*

And to this Teſtimony of the Apoſtles and other Eye-witneſſes of our Lord's glorified Body, we may likewiſe add, that the Abſurdity of the Pretence made uſe of to evade this Evidence, and the further Teſtimony of the holy Angels, which were ſent down to attend at the Sepulchre, make the Truth of this great Event yet more unconteſtable. It generally argues a very bad Cauſe, when Men are driven to Abſurdities

and

and Contradictions to defend it; and such, surely, was the Pretence put in the Mouths of the Soldiers, set by the jealous *Jews* to guard the Sepulchre; That the Disciples had stolen away our Lord's Body while they slept. A Pretence, which was plainly the Refuge of Self-conviction and Stubbornness; they obstinately chose rather to content themselves with the most stupid and senseless Evasion that could have been invented, than acknowledge the Truth of what they knew. For *some of the Watch came into the City, and shewed unto the High Priest, all the Things that were done.* If His Disciples did in reality attempt to steal Him; why had not they prevented them? If they were asleep when the Attempt was made, how knew they that this was attempted? Thus miserably were they forced to evade what they could not deny, when (won over by Authority and Interest) they pretended to stifle that Confusion and Amazement which they were scarce able to survive, when they felt the trembling Earth acknowledge her rising Lord, and beheld the Countenance of His heavenly Heralds to be *like Lightning, and their Raiment white as Snow*, when they

came down with Terror to bear their Testimony to His rising, and to proclaim His Victory over the Grave. That the Body was gone out of the Sepulchre at the Time foretold, notwithstanding all their Care to keep it, the greatest Enemies allowed; how it went, the Angels testified; and both these are corroborating Circumstances, which strongly confirm the Evidence of those who so often saw Him.

But further; if neither the Soldiers had confirmed the Truth of His Resurrection, by their absurd Way of denying it, nor the heavenly Ministers by their Presence added to the Glory of it; if we had only the Declaration of the Apostles themselves in Vindication of it; yet have we such a further Confirmation of their Integrity, as was an infallible Demonstration to themselves, and consequently is to us, that they could not possibly be deceived in what they affirmed of it. We may very well allow, that the Word of God was in every Sentence, when the Arm of Omnipotence shewed itself in every Action. When miraculous Powers shew forth themselves in Men, the Author of those Gifts cannot surely be unknown; nor

nor can we with leſs Folly than Blaſphemy ſuppoſe, that the God of Truth can give His Sanction to a Lie. When, therefore, the Devils were caſt out, and the Lame were made to walk, in the Name of *Jeſus*, and through the Power of His Reſurrection; as we cannot, with the giddy Multitude, from thence infer, that *the Gods were come down* from Heaven, *in the Shape of Men*; ſo neither can we, with the leaſt Appearance of Reaſon, reject or ſcruple, a Fact thus miraculouſly atteſted. When thoſe illiterate Diſciples found ſo wonderful a Change in themſelves, that they in an inſtant became Maſters of the Learning of the World, and their Folly was turned into Wiſdom; they could not poſſibly be ignorant from whence they had thoſe Languages, to which they were utter Strangers the Moment before they ſpake them; nor could they be at any Loſs to know, whether they underſtood what they ſaid: And when we find them, in the Proſecution of their Miniſtry, daily working Miracles in confirmation of the Doctrines they advance, and laying down this Article of their Maſter's Reſurrection as the Baſis of the whole; each Doubt then be-

comes unmanly and unreasonable, because every Miracle speaks its Author, and every supernatural Gift does clearly demonstrate, that the Spirit of the Most High God dwelt in them. So that, upon the whole, we have not only as great, but much greater Evidence for the Support of this Article, than any Man thinks necessary, or requires, in Proof of any other Fact, though of the greatest Consequence in his temporal Concerns; and it is, indeed, if all things were impartially weighed, not less, but abundantly more absurd and irrational, for any Man to question, whether our Lord is risen, than it were to doubt, whether *Julius Cæsar* ever reigned in *Rome*, or *William the Conqueror* in *England*; because the original Witnesses in the former Case could not possibly be deceived themselves; and it is morally impossible, that they should deceive us; because the written Evidence from Records, and public Monuments, is at least as strong in one Case, as in the other; and because to these we have likewise added the greater Testimony of that God, *who spake in Times past unto the Fathers by the Prophets; and has not only spoken unto us by His Son, but has also declared Him*

Him to be the Son of God, by the Powers with which He has teſtified *His Reſurrection from the Dead*. The preſent Advantages of which Reſurrection, as they are manifold and great, deſerve the

II. Second Place in this Day's Meditations. In conſidering which, the firſt thing that occurs, is the Aſſurance He has hereby given us of our own Reſurrection. If it be certain, that *Chriſt is riſen*, it is as certain, according to St. *Paul*, that He *is become the Firſt Fruits of them that ſlept*. The ſeveral Proofs alledged for the Reality of His Reſurrection, are ſo many Teſtimonies of the Certainty of ours; for, as that great Apoſtle of the Gentiles argues (1 *Theſſ.* iv. 14.) *if* they are ſufficient to perſuade us to *believe that Jeſus died, and roſe again*; the inevitable Conſequence is, that *them alſo, which ſleep in Jeſus, will God bring with Him*. All Pretences of the Impoſſibility of our riſing are thereby removed, and the Actuality of it is ſufficiently aſcertained by the repeated Promiſes that are given us, that *when He ſhall appear* in His glorified Body at His ſecond Coming, then *we*, in

ours, *ſhall be like Him.* Without the Intervention of an Arm of Power, the diſſolved Body cannot, indeed, of itſelf ſtart up into Life; but, then, that there is a Power able to effect this, we can need no farther Proof; we have, as at this Day, ſeen one Inſtance of it in the Lord *Chriſt Jeſus*; which Inſtance does likewiſe imply, that as He can, ſo He will effect it, when *the Fulneſs of Time ſhall come*, for *the Heavens to diſſolve, and the Earth to melt away at His Preſence.* For the Reſurrection of our Lord, as it is the Foundation of the whole Chriſtian Faith, ſo it is one general Proof of all His Doctrines: It demonſtrates His divine Authority, and confirms the Truth of all He taught and ſaid, and thereby infallibly aſſures us, that He is Himſelf *the Reſurrection and the Life; and that whoſoever believeth in Him, though he die, yet ſhall he live.* Had not our Lord aroſe, the Religion He taught would, moſt probably, have been buried with Him; but ſince He thus evidently and undeniably demonſtrated His Triumph over Death, all faithful Chriſtians may, with Confidence, lay hold on the bleſſed Hope of everlaſting Life, which He

He has given them in Himſelf, and with Tranſport behold Him opening the Gates of Heaven, and entering therein before them, there to prepare a Place for them. Which leads me to a

2. Second Benefit of this His Reſurrection, that it paved the way for His Exaltation to the Right Hand of the Majeſty on high, where He is now ſeated above all Principality, Authority, and Power. By this He is empowered to relieve the Neceſſities of His Servants, to direct, govern, and ſuppor His Church, and to give her in the Day of Calamity, Relief and Comfort, and in al her Conflicts, Victory and Peace. The fomer Advantage of the Reſurrection was, tha the Faithful are thereby aſſured, that there i an eternal Inheritance prepared for them; his that I now mention is, that they may litewiſe from thence learn, that they ſhall not fail of obtaining it; by the one we infer, that Body and Soul ſhall appear in Judgment; by the other, that we ſhall be prepared to appear with Joy in that dreadful Day; That aſſures us, that our Bodies ſhall riſe, This, that our Souls ſhall be duly prepared to receive the Bene-

fits

fits of the Resurrection. We must remember then that as our Lord is risen, so He is ascended up on high, where, after He had *led Captivity captive, He received Gifts for Men.* And accordingly we find Him, soon after his Ascension, sending down on His Apostles the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, that through His Assistance they might rejoice in the Tribulation they suffered for the Defence of the Gospel, and be in the End made perfect thro' Sufferings. Which Spirit He is at this Day sending, to all that love Him; not indeed in an external and visible manner, but conveying His invisible and secret Powers to the Heart, whereby they subdue all Difficulties, despise the Allurements of Sin, and become in all things *more than Conquerors.* So that, to His Resurrection we, in a great measure, owe the divine Assistance of that Grace, by which alone we stand; and without which, the having manifested our Eternity to us, would not have diminished, but increased, our Misery; and therefore, as our gracious Redeemer died, so He rose again for us, in order to receive the Glory He had so dearly pur-

purchaſed, and to ſtrengthen His Brethren by empowering them to qualify themſelves for the ſame Enjoyments with Him, that the Head and Members might be more cloſely united, and eternally rejoice together. A

3. Third preſent Advantage of our Lord's Reſurrection is, that He has the Government of the World committed to Him. The Reins of Power are placed in His Hands, whereby our ſpiritual Enemies are become His Vaſſals, and their Malice is confined within the Limits of His Permiſſion; *beyond* which they cannot go, *without* which they cannot approach to hurt us. Our great Adverſary is now no longer permitted to roam at pleaſure, and commit what Devaſtations his Rage ſuggeſts; but is bound down with Chains which he cannot break, confined within Limits which he cannot paſs, without a Permiſſion from our aſcended Lord, *to whom*, by the Father, *all Power*, as well as *all Judgment*, *is committed.*

So that, in a word, the Advantages of the Glory of this Day diſplay themſelves on every Side. The Evils we were ſubject to are thereby removed; the Wants we groaned under

under ſupplied; the Power of our ſpiritual Enemies is reſtrained; the Defects of our Nature are amended; and a glorious Immortality is aſcertained to all thoſe, who ſhall be prepared to meet Him at the great Day of Retribution. Which naturally leads us to conſider the

III. Third thing propoſed, namely the Influence theſe Bleſſings ought to have on our Lives and Converſations. And

1. Is the Strength of our ſpiritual Adverſary thus curbed and reſtrained? are we certain that if we *reſiſt* him, he will be forced to *flee from us?* This then ſhould diſpel thoſe gloomy Fears, which our Apprehenſions of Danger might otherwiſe raiſe and cheriſh, and animate us with bold and ſteady Reſolutions, not tamely to ſink under the Dominion of Sin. The Plea of Weakneſs and Inability is hereby taken from us; and every Tranſgreſſion will argue not the Greatneſs of the Danger, but the Obſtinacy and Cowardice of the Sinner; and as through the Publication of theſe Truths our wilful Ignorance, ſo through the Certainty of them, our

our unmanly Diſtruſts are rendered inexcuſable. When therefore our corrupt Paſſions and Inclinations become importunate, and urge us to the Purſuit of ſome darling Vice; when the Terrors of Men ſet themſelves in Array againſt us, and the Apprehenſion of Loſſes and temporal Inconveniencies ſtrongly tempt us to ſinful Compliances; let us look up with Confidence to our glorified Lord, who upon His Exaltation received Power, and has graciouſly promiſed to exert that Power, in our Defence.

Again; is our own Reſurrection thus plainly manifeſted and aſcertained in that of our Bleſſed Saviour? This then ſhould quicken and ſtrengthen our Hope of that future Glory, which He will give *to all thoſe who love his Appearing*. Our Difficulties and Diſtreſſes in our Chriſtian Courſe would daily leſſen, and we ſhould learn to ſurmount with Comfort the Hardſhips of our Warfare; if we would often meditate on the Recompenſe of Reward. Which ſhould not only be the particular Employment of theſe occaſional Rejoicings, but the daily Exerciſe of pious Minds, in order thereby to raiſe themſelves

ſelves to ſuch a Degree of Chriſtian Perfection, as may teach them to deſpiſe the Enjoyments of Time, and with Scorn reject them; whenever they interfere with thoſe of Eternity. And

Laſtly, as the Promiſe of divine Aſſiſtances ſhould remove our Fears, and the Expectation of our own Reſurrection ſtrengthen our Hope; ſo ſhould the Remembrance of the dear Purchaſe our Great Maſter paid for theſe Bleſſings, be a perpetual Fountain of Joy in our Hearts, bringing forth the Fruits of Praiſe, Gratitude, and Thankſgiving. Such a Joy, as is the Product of a Heart deeply and ſincerely affected with the tender Mercies and loving Kindneſſes of his God and Saviour; not the Effect of a warm Complexion, which dies in the Expreſſion; but ſuch a one as we daily ought devoutly to pray for; ſuch as will ſhew forth the Praiſe of our Redeemer, and its Thankfulneſs for His Reſurrection not only with the Lips, but in the Lives of thoſe who are actuated by it. The beſt way then of expreſſing our Gratitude is to follow the Advice of the Epiſtle for this Day, *to die unto Sin and to*

to rise again unto Righteousness, and to seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the Right Hand of God; to set our Affections on things above, not on things on the Earth, that so when He our Lord shall shall appear, then may we also appear with Him in Glory.

THE NATURE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND HIS OPERATIONS, CONSIDERED.

Preached on WHIT-SUNDAY.

E

The Nature of the Holy Spirit, and His Operations, considered.

SERMON III.

1 COR. xii. 11.

But all these worketh That One and The Self-same Spirit, dividing to every Man severally, as He willeth.

διαιρων ΙΔΙΑ εκαςω καθως βουλεται.

WHEN the Blessed *Jesus* was entering on the last and most bitter Scene of His Passion, we find Him very affectionately guarding His Disciples against all those Fears, Doubts, and Discouragements, with which His Sufferings would naturally fill their Minds; either with regard to themselves His Followers and Dependents; or with regard to Him their be-

loved Maſter; or with regard to the Succeſs of His Doctrines. That the Sight of His Apprehenſion and Death might not drive them into Deſpair, and perſuade them, that all their Hopes and Expectations were loſt; He tells them, that there were *many Manſions* of Bliſs *in His* heavenly *Father's Houſe* (*John* xiv. 2.) whither He was going; and that one gracious Deſign of His Aſcenſion, was to *prepare a Place* for them in it; *that where He ſhould be, there they might be alſo.* That they might not, in the mean time, give themſelves up to Sorrow and Lamentation for the Loſs of their Great Maſter and Teacher, *who ſpake as never Man ſpake*; He promiſes to ſend them *another Comforter*, whoſe Stay with them ſhould not be ſo ſhort as His had been; but who ſhould *abide with them for ever* (*ibid.* ℣ 16.) That they might not raſhly conclude, that the Son of Man was loſt, when they ſhould ſee Him crucified and dead; and lay aſide all Thoughts of preaching the Doctrines of a crucified Lord, as a vain and fruitleſs Attempt; He aſſures them, that this *Holy Ghoſt, the Comforter, Whom He would ſend them from the Father,* ſhould *teſtify of Him,* with mighty Signs and Wonders;

Wonders; endue *them* with Variety of miraculous Gifts, according to their ſeveral Exigencies and Wants; and give them ſuch *a Mouth and Wiſdom (Luke* xxi. 15.) *as all their Adverſaries ſhould not be able to gainſay or reſiſt:* That He, *The Spirit of Truth*, ſhould firſt open and enlarge their Minds, and then fill them with *all Truth; (John* xvi. 13.) that He ſhould bring all paſt things to *their Remembrance, whatſoever* their Lord and Maſter *had ſaid to them*; and ſhould alſo *ſhew them things to come*; that whatever they aſked in their Maſter's Name, ſhould be done for them; and that they ſhould not only be enabled *to do the Works which* the Bleſſed *Jeſus did*, but ſhould likewiſe be empowered to do ſome *greater Works* than He had done; *becauſe He went to the Father*, to receive theſe Gifts from Him, and *then to endow them with theſe Powers from on high.*

Accordingly, ſays St. *Luke (Acts* ii. 1.) *when the Day of Pentecoſt was fully come*, that is, on the firſt Day of the Week, which was the Morrow after the ſeventh Sabbath, or the fiftieth Day after the Paſſover; and when the Diſciples, that is, as

I ſuppoſe, the one hundred and twenty Perſons before mentioned (*Acts* i. 15.) *were all in one Place; there ſuddenly came a Sound from Heaven as of a mighty ruſhing Wind, there appeared cloven Tongues, like as of Fire, which ſat upon each of them, and they were filled with The Holy Ghoſt, and began to ſpeak with other Tongues* than that of their own Country, *as The Spirit gave them Utterance.* Thus were they *baptized with The Holy Ghoſt, and with Fire,* and were thereby enabled to gather in, and offer up to God, no leſs than three thouſand Souls, as the Firſt-fruits of the Chriſtian Church, on the very Day on which the *Jews* offered to God the Firſt-fruits of their Wheat-harveſt, (*Exod.* xxiii. 16.) and which they celebrated as a Feſtival, in Commemoration of God's giving the Law to *Moſes*, on the fiftieth Day after the *Jews* came out of *Egypt*.

This Gift of Tongues was one of the moſt neceſſary Qualifications for the ſpeedy Propagation of the Faith, and was therefore firſt granted; and as long as it was neceſſary to anſwer the Deſign of The Holy Ghoſt, was continued in the Church. But the Promiſe

miſe was not confined to this Gift alone; it extended to all other things wanted for the right underſtanding and effectual preaching of the Goſpel; and therefore with it were vouchſafed many other Gifts to the Apoſtles and other Diſciples; and every one was enlightened with Knowledge, or inſpired with Eloquence, Prudence, and Courage, or endowed with Power, according as his Office or Station required. As the Wants were many, ſo was the Supply plentiful. The Divine Spirit diſplayed His Power no leſs in the Variety, than in the Manner of His Operations; and diſtributed them in ſuch Degrees and Proportion as would be moſt conducive to His moſt gracious Purpoſe and Deſign in giving them. For thus St. *Paul* obſerves, a few Verſes before the Text, That *the Manifeſtation of The Spirit was given to every Man to profit withal*; or rather *for Profit*, or Edification, in general; that is, *He manifeſted Himſelf*, or vouchſafed His Gifts, to every particular Perſon, in ſuch Manner and Meaſure only, as would tend moſt *to the Profit of the Whole*. After which are enumerated thoſe different miraculous Endowments which

are called *the Word of Wiſdom*, *the Word of Knowledge*, *Faith*, *the Gifts of Healing*, *Miracles*, *Prophecy*, *diſcerning of Spirits*, *divers Kinds of Tongues*, and *the Interpretation of Tongues*; and the Apoſtle concludes this Enumeration with obſerving, in the Words of the Text, that though the Gifts were various, the Author of them was one and the ſame, even that *Holy Ghoſt The Comforter*, whom our Lord had promiſed, and who was abſolute Maſter of His own Endowments, and gave them according to His own good Pleaſure. *But all theſe worketh That One and The Self-ſame Spirit, dividing to every Man ſeverally as He willeth.* In ſpeaking to which Words, I ſhall,

I. Take a ſhort View of the chief of thoſe Operations, which the Apoſtle here aſcribes to *One and The Self-ſame Cauſe*. And,

II. Enquire into the Nature of the Divine Author of theſe Gifts, who moſt probably is here called *The Same Spirit*, *The Same Lord*, and *The Same God*, and Who is ſaid, in this Place, to *work all thoſe things*,

things, and (as we ſeem to have imperfectly rendered the Original) *divided them to every one* SEVERALLY *as He willeth.*

I. Firſt, I am to take a ſhort View of thoſe Operations, which the Apoſtle here aſcribes to *One and the Self-ſame Cauſe*; and ſhall therefore, for the greater Perſpicuity, reduce them to theſe three Claſſes; ſuch as were neceſſary to enable the Apoſtles, and others, to underſtand and teach the Goſpel; ſuch as were neceſſary to enable them to govern the Churches committed to their Care; and ſuch as were neceſſary to prove to the World the Truth of the Doctrines they taught, and the Facts they atteſted.

The Apoſtles were illiterate Men, full of the falſe Prejudices and Prepoſſeſſions of the *Jews*, in relation to their *Meſſiah*; ignorant of the Nature of *Chriſt*'s Kingdom, even after His Reſurrection; and Strangers to the great and myſterious Doctrines of His Religion. It was neceſſary, therefore, that they ſhould firſt underſtand Chriſtianity themſelves, before they could teach it to others; that their own Minds ſhould be

firſt

first enlarged, and filled with Divine Truths, before they could pretend, with any Probability of Succeſs, to perſuade the World to embrace them. And accordingly, moſt of their falſe Notions of things were inſtantaneouſly rectified, and the myſterious Doctrines of the Goſpel inſpired into their Minds, upon the Deſcent of The Holy Ghoſt upon them; and they were farther inſtructed by God in others. And this Gift, I believe, is what the Apoſtle here means by *the Word of Wiſdom*. That the Apoſtles had this Gift immediately upon the Deſcent of The Divine Spirit, is evident from hence, that they immediately began to preach, and with wonderful Succeſs: And I underſtand this Illumination to be meant by *the Gift of Wiſdom*; becauſe this is that Wiſdom which makes us *wiſe unto Salvation*; becauſe St. *Paul*, in the firſt Chapter of this Epiſtle, ℣ 24. calls the Doctrines of *Chriſt crucified*, not *the Power only*, but alſo THE WISDOM OF GOD; and Chap. ii. ℣ 7. ſays of the Goſpel in general, *We ſpeak* THE WISDOM OF GOD *in a Myſtery, even* THE HIDDEN WISDOM, *which God ordained before the World, unto our Glory.*

And

And as the other Apoſtles received this Wiſdom by Inſpiration; ſo *St. Paul* tells us of himſelf, that he *received not the Goſpel* (or the Word of Wiſdom) which *he preached, of Man, neither was he taught it* by any other of the Apoſtles, though he afterwards conferred with them on this as well as other Subjects; *but by* immediate *Revelation of Jeſus Chriſt* from Heaven [a].

And as it was neceſſary, that they ſhould underſtand the divine Oeconomy under the Goſpel, ſo likewiſe was it, that their Miſtakes ſhould be rectified concerning the Meaning and Deſign of God's Diſpenſations under the Law; that they ſhould fully underſtand all the Types and Figures of the *Jewiſh* Inſtitutions and Rites, and be infallibly aſſured of the true and full Intent of the Predictions of the Prophets. This they wanted, to qualify them to confirm the Truths of Chriſtianity to their Brethren the *Jews*, and to prove, by *Authority*, the Falſhood of the Interpretations which were generally put on thoſe divine Writings, with reſpect to The *Meſſiah*. And this ſeems to be meant here, by *the Word of Knowledge*, as diſtinguiſhed from

[a] Gal. i. 12.

that

that of *Wisdom* and *Prophecy*; namely, a Knowledge, that *Moses* and the old Prophets did *not minister unto the* Ages in which they lived only, *but unto us*; and that *The Spirit of Christ which was in them, did testify before hand the Sufferings of Christ, and the Glory which should follow* [a]. And accordingly we find *St. Peter*, in his first Sermon immediately after the Descent of The Holy Ghost, as on this Day, proving, from the *Psalms* [b], the Resurrection of *Christ*; as well as demonstrating, that that *Jesus* of *Nazareth*, whom they had slain, was The *Christ* whom the Psalmist meant by those Powers of The Holy Ghost, which *He had then shed forth upon* the Apostles and Disciples, and *which* the Jews then *saw and heard.*

Thus were they enlightened in their Minds with a right Knowledge and Apprehension of all the past and present Will of God, concerning the Truths He had, or would reveal to His Creatures; and in order to enable them to communicate these Truths, a third Gift was added to these, which our Apostle here calls *Diversities*, or *divers Kinds of Tongues*. Though they might un-

[a] 1 Pet. i. 11, 12. [b] Acts ii. 26, 27, &c.

derstand,

derſtand, they could not teach theſe things to People of different Languages, without ſpeaking to them in a Language which they underſtood; and therefore they were ſuddenly inſpired with this kind of Knowledge alſo; they became at once Maſters of all ſuch Languages as were neceſſary; they not only underſtood them, but were endued with a ready Fluency and Eloquence; and they ſpake the Word, as with *Boldneſs* and *Reſolution*, ſo with great Propriety and Perſpicuity. The People of twelve or fourteen different Countries heard the Apoſtles *ſpeak the wonderful Things of God, in their own Tongues*, in the firſt Inſtance; and *St. Paul* ſays, that he ſpake with *more Tongues than they all* [a].

Theſe were the Gifts neceſſary to qualify the Apoſtles, and other Miniſters to underſtand and teach the Word; and to theſe were added ſuch other Endowments as were requiſite for their Government of the Churches they founded. Thoſe here mentioned are *Prophecy*, *the Interpretation of Tongues*, and *the Diſcernment of Spirits*. *Prophecy*, in the *New Teſtament*, ſignifies

[a] 1 Cor. xiv. 18.

not

not only the Knowledge of paſt or future Events, but of preſent Tranſactions performed at a Diſtance from the Prophet. In this Senſe *St. Paul* was *preſent in Spirit* with this Church of *Corinth* [a], *though abſent in Body*; and was thereby enabled to exerciſe his Authority over it, and aſſign over the inceſtuous *Corinthian to Satan, for the Deſtruction of the Fleſh.* And in the xiv[th] Chapter of this Epiſtle, our Apoſtle ſeems plainly to uſe the Word *Prophecy* to ſignify any Act done, by the immediate Suggeſtions of The Divine Spirit, in the public Aſſemblies of the Church, for their *Edification, Exhortation, or Comfort.* By their greater or leſs Uſe and Tendency towards theſe excellent Ends, he judges of the comparative Excellency of ſome ſupernatural Gifts: and prefers *Prophecy*, as he explains it of *inſpired* Prayer or Preaching, to ſpeaking with unknown Tongues, becauſe it was more for the Benefit of the Hearers. And he ſeems likewiſe to include here under *Prophecy*, that Spirit of Prudence, whereby ſome were enabled to preſide over the reſt; and the Spirits of ſome Prophets were ſubject to other Prophets, who were to judge of what

[a] 1 Cor. v. 3.

they

they ſaid, and direct all to be performed in ſuch manner, as would be moſt orderly and decent, and tend moſt to the Edification of the Church.

And ſince ſome were, or pretended to be, endued with the Gift of ſpeaking Tongues, which they could not with Readineſs and Clearneſs explain; whilſt others, who were not enabled to ſpeak in thoſe Languages, were empowered to underſtand and interpret them; *St. Paul* therefore comparing thoſe two miraculous Vouchſafements, prefers that of the *Interpretation of Tongues* to that of ſpeaking with them, becauſe more for the ſpiritual Profit of the Aſſembly; and orders, that no one ſhall exerciſe the latter, *but keep Silence in the Church*, unleſs there be another preſent *to interpret* [a].

And by *the Diſcernment of Spirits*, which is here reckoned among the miraculous Gifts, I underſtand, that Power, whereby the Secrets of Mens Hearts were made manifeſt to the Apoſtles and Prophets; and whereby they could infallibly judge of their Intentions and Deſigns, as in the Caſe of *Ananias* and *Sapphira*; and conſequently, where-

[a] 1 Cor. xiv. 27, 28.

by

by those Apostles were enabled to prevent any Mischiefs or Impositions on the Church, and to inflict present Punishment on Offenders according to their real Demerit, and to the Terror of other Evil-doers. By this, they were also enabled to judge of all those who pretended to Inspiration, to discern the false from the true Spirits, and to preserve the Faithful from being deceived by those Prophets, who might arise, and falsly lay Claim to Inspiration. And

Lastly, the miraculous Gifts here mentioned, which respect their proving to the World the Truth of the Doctrines they taught, and the Facts they attested, are *Faith*, *Healing*, and other *Miracles*; concerning which I shall only observe, that by *Faith* here seems to be meant a firm Persuasion, that the Powers of Nature should be over-ruled, and they should be enabled to alter, obstruct, or change the common Course of Things, whenever it should be necessary for the Confirmation of their Mission. Or, in other Words, that Faith, of which our Lord told them, that if they had the least *Grain of it*, *they should even say to a Mountain*, *Remove hence to yonder place*, *and*

and it ſhould remove; and nothing ſhould *be impoſſible unto* them. This Perſuaſion was wrought in their Minds by the immediate and extraordinary Operation of the Holy Ghoſt; and therefore this *Faith* is ranked among His other extraordinary Gifts; and the ſame *Spirit*, which inſpired them with this Belief, gave them Power to produce the Effects expected by it, to heal *Diſeaſes*, and to work the many other Miracles recorded of them, in the Sacred Hiſtory of their Acts, by St. *Luke*. Thus were the firſt Teachers and Founders of Chriſtianity qualified to preach and to demonſtrate the Truth of their Doctrines, to plant Churches, and to govern them. The

II. Second thing propoſed, was to enquire into the Nature of The Author of theſe Gifts, Who, moſt probably, is here expreſly called *The Same Spirit*, *The Same Lord*, and *The Same God*, and Who is ſaid to *work all theſe* Wonders, as well as to *divide*, or diſtribute, *them to every Man ſeverally as He pleaſed*. And here there need not any long Deductions to prove, that this *Spirit* muſt have been no leſs than God

Himself. The Nature of these Gifts, as before explained; the absolute Power which the Apostle here ascribes to The Divine Spirit, of disposing of them; and, as I apprehend, the Right and Property, if I may so speak, which the Apostle here gives Him to them; do plainly and necessarily imply it. For St. *Paul* does here evidently affirm these three things concerning those miraculous Vouchsafements: 1. That the Cause or Author of them all was *one and the self-same* Person. 2. That he not only bestowed these Gifts, but did it in such a Manner and Proportion *as He pleased*; disposing of them with an absolute Authority. And, 3. That He was not only the Worker, and absolute Disposer of them, but that the Works and Powers themselves were, strictly speaking, *His own:* For so I conceive the Words ought to be rendered, *dividing His own to every one severally as he willeth*, διαιρων ΙΔΙΑ εκαστῳ καθως βουλεται: that is, distributing *His own* Vouchsafements to *each* τονδυναμαιικον, or inspired Person, in such Manner and Measure as He, the Divine Author of them, judged to be proper, and knew to be most conducive to His

His very gracious Design of founding and establishing His Church. And these three Particulars, when seriously and jointly considered, must, I conceive, fully satisfy any serious and considerate Christian, that *That* Holy Spirit, of Whom our inspired Apostle, in this Place, affirms so much, must be truly and properly God, the Author of Nature, and the absolute Governor and Disposer of all things. For,

1. His Assertion expresly is, That the Cause or Author of all those wonderful Powers, was *one and the self-same* Person; and consequently That Person could be no less than God Himself. For who could empower Men to remove Mountains, and to cure Diseases with the Breath of their Mouths; but the Almighty Creator and Governor of the World? Who could give them a kind of Omniscience, and enable them to look into, and discern the Hearts of their Brethren; but That Infinite and Omnipresent God, *Who understandeth our Thoughts before* we utter them? And the same is true of every other miraculous Endowment before mentioned. Whoever duly considers, with what Fatigue and Application the most scanty Portions of Knowledge

are ordinarily acquired; how gradual, and how ſlow, our Advances uſually are; and how ſmall our Attainments, after a laborious Search of many Years; muſt ſurely readily acknowledge, that to dart Light and Wiſdom at once into the moſt ignorant Soul, to make the moſt illiterate and uncultivated Minds learned in an Inſtant; could be the Work of none but of Him that formed it. Whoever impartially enquires, how limited and confined the moſt enlarged Mind is in her Operations; how few things there are, which after all our Care we *really* underſtand; and how many exceed the reach of the greateſt Capacity; cannot ſurely but confeſs, that to imprint on the moſt untaught Minds clear Notions of the moſt ſublime Truths; to unfold to the Capacity of common Mechanics the wondrous things of God's Law, and the hidden Meaning of the dark Sayings of the Prophets, could only be done by That Supreme God, who ſent thoſe Prophets, and could moſt infallibly interpret their Predictions. Thus does every particular Gift ſufficiently imply the Divinity of its Author; and when we join them all,

all, as our Apostle does, in one Conclusion; the Force of the Argument is not, I think, to be resisted. *All these*, says he, *worketh That One and the Self-same Spirit*; they are not each the different Gift of a different Power, as the Heathen imagined of their false Gods; but they are all and each the Vouchsafements of One and the Same Being, Who is unconfined in His Power, and unlimited in His Operations: And who then can this *one Cause* be, but the Author of all Good, the *Lord and Giver of Life*, both temporal and eternal? But,

2. Secondly, St. *Paul* does not only derive all these Gifts from one and the same Cause, but likewise ascribes to This Cause an absolute and unlimited Authority to dispose of them *as He pleased. He divided*, or distributed them, not *to every Man*, but *to every one*, that is, to every *spiritual*, or *inspired Person*, according to His own good Will and Pleasure. The Powers were, therefore, *His*, and under the Controul of no Superior, since He could thus arbitrarily dispose of them. He could not be an Agent in the Hands of another, since His own Will was His only Rule in the Distribution.

He could not be a mere Name, an Appellation, or an Attribute of God, since He had both Power to act in this wonderful Manner, and a Will of His own to influence and govern His Operations. A manifest Wisdom and Choice appeared in the Manner and Measure of His Distributions; and consequently there must have been great Judgment and Design in Him that made them. The Powers granted were not only great and wonderful in themselves, but suited to the present State and Circumstances of things, and adapted to the Capacity and Office of each respective Receiver; The Giver must therefore have been well acquainted with the Minds and Hearts of Men, and must have foreseen those great and most gracious Purposes, which were fully answered by His Vouchsafements. And who then could This Free, This Intelligent, This Knowing, and This Wise Being be? Or, rather, who could act thus freely, thus independently, thus wisely, and thus graciously, in controuling the Powers of Nature with an unlimited Authority, and enlarging the Souls of Men beyond their natural Capacities; but That One Infinite

and

and Independent Spirit, the Cause of all things, *by Whom, and for Whom, they were, and are created*, governed, and supported.

3. Thirdly, and lastly; Our Apostle not only attributes to the Holy Ghost an unbounded Authority to bestow these things; but does, as I apprehend, expressly declare, that they were *His own* proper Gifts and Powers which He thus bestowed; thereby taking away all Pretence, that He acted by a delegated Commission from another; and implying, that the Powers He gave, were originally founded in, and derived from Himself. The literal Translation of the Words is this, *Dividing* HIS OWN (ἰδία) that is, HIS OWN *Gifts*, or *Operations*, (χαρίσματα, ver. 4. or ἐνεργήματα, ver. 6.) *to every one*, or each *inspired Person* (πνεύματικος) *as He willeth*. The Word I translate *His own*, is used in multitudes of Places of the New Testament, to signify the strictest Right and Propriety, and is so rendered by our Translators; and particularly our own Apostle, 2 *Tim.* i. 9. speaking of our Redemption, says, that God *hath saved us, and called us, not according*

to our Works, but according to HIS OWN *Purpose and Grace*; and, *Heb.* ix. 12. he says of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, that *not by the Blood of Goats and Calves, but by* HIS OWN *Blood, He entered in once into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal Redemption for us*[a]. And if, then, the stupendous Gifts of the Holy Ghost, to the Apostles, were as much HIS OWN Gifts, as the gracious Design of God the Father to redeem Mankind was HIS OWN *Purpose*; if the Powers sent down by the Holy Spirit were as much *His own* Powers, as the Blood which our Lord spilt on the Cross was HIS OWN Blood; those Gifts and Powers, then, must have been in the strictest Sense derived from Himself; and He can be no less than The Supreme God, who ordereth all things both in Heaven and Earth.

Thus we see, in how plain and forcible a Manner our Apostle here teaches us both the Personality and Divinity of God the Holy Ghost; and from thence I shall, at present, only draw this most obvious Inference, That to Him, therefore, ought

[a] In the Original the same Word occurs in both these Places.

to

to be paid Adoration and Praiſe, in all Churches of the Saints. We are baptized in His Name, as well as That of the Father and the Son: And as the Apoſtles owed their miraculous Powers to His free Grace and Goodneſs; ſo do we at preſent owe our Continuance and Progreſs in our Duty to His Guidance and Support.

To Him, then, *with* the Father, and the Son, be aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Honour, Glory, and Dominion, both now, and for evermore.

REASON

REASON

AN

INSUFFICIENT GUIDE

IN

Matters of Religion.

Reaſon an inſufficient Guide in Matters of Religion.

SERMON IV.

PSALM xix. 7.

The Teſtimony of the Lord is ſure.

THE Word *Teſtimony* may here be underſtood, either *literally*, of that external Evidence, which The Almighty was pleaſed to give the *Jews* of the Divine Authority of His Laws; or *figuratively*, of thoſe Laws themſelves ſo atteſted and proved. In the former Senſe, the Pſalmiſt's Aſſertion is; That God had given ſuch Proofs of the Authenticneſs of His Commandments, as might, with the greateſt Aſſurance and Dependance, be relied on; And in the latter, he affirms, that thoſe Commands, which He had given, were the beſt and *ſureſt* Rule by which Men could walk, and would certainly

tainly lead them to that Happineſs which they ſought in purſuing them. And both Senſes taken together, imply both the Goodneſs and Condeſcenſion of Almighty God, in vouchſafing Men a Guide, ſo ſure, and ſo ſtrongly proved to come from Himſelf; and the Happineſs of His choſen People in ſuch Vouchſafements. So that we may conceive the Pſalmiſt to be here aſſerting, That The Great Creator of all Things had given the *Jews* as evident Marks of Himſelf in the *moral* or rather the *religious* World, as in the *natural*; and that they might as clearly diſcover His Beneficence and Authority in the one as in the other. The whole *Pſalm* is a Parallel drawn between the Goodneſs of God, conſidered as The Creator and Governor of the World, and His Beneficence, as King and Lawgiver of the *Jews*; and the chief Deſign of it evidently was to poſſeſs himſelf and others with a due Senſe of the mighty Benefits received, and a proper Gratitude and Thankfulneſs for them.

And in purſuance therefore of the ſame pious Purpoſes, it muſt ever be right and proper for us to apply theſe Words to ourſelves; and to enquire, whether at all, or how

how far, we partake of the ſame Goodneſs, and are obliged to the ſame Returns of Praiſe and Thankſgiving. And in order to have a juſt Senſe of this, it is neceſſary, that we ſhould examine, what means we have of coming to the Knowledge of the Will of God, and with what Degree of Aſſurance and Confidence we may rely upon them; or how far we can be aſſured, that the Knowledge we pretend to have of the Divine Law is really ſure; and how far that Knowledge is in itſelf complete, and ſufficient to anſwer the Purpoſes for which we want it.

And ſince we can have only two ways of coming at the Knowledge of God's Laws, namely Reaſon, or Revelation; that is, either by the Dictates and Concluſions of our own Minds, or by the immediate Declarations of God Himſelf, or of ſome other Perſons ſent to us by Him with ſufficient Credentials that they are His Meſſengers; the firſt Step in this Enquiry plainly is; How far we may depend on the Deductions of unaſſiſted Reaſon in this important Affair; or, How far that is of itſelf a ſure Guide in the Knowledge of religious Duties. And in doing this it may be proper, to conſider

I. How

I. How far unaſſiſted Reaſon may appear capable of directing us, from the Nature of theſe religious Duties. And

II. How far, in fact, it really has helped Men in theſe Matters, in any Age or Nation of the World.

I. Firſt, I am to conſider, how far we may depend on the Deductions of unaſſiſted Reaſon; or, in other Words, how far that is of itſelf a ſure and ſatisfactory Guide to us in the Knowledge of religious Duties. And here it is very obvious, that ſome of the chief Points, in which we want to be ſatisfied in this Enquiry, are; How we may worſhip The God Who made us in an acceptable manner; and, in caſe of offending Him, What Puniſhment He will inflict upon us for our Offences; and Whether in any, or what, Manner that Puniſhment may be avoided, His Anger appeaſed, and the Offender reinſtated in His Favour. Theſe, I ſay, are ſome of the principal Articles in which we want Information; and to theſe I ſhall confine myſelf. Many others of very great

great Consequence, might be added to them, but it would extend the Enquiry to too great a Length, to examine scrupulously and accurately into every Particular; and we may safely conclude, without that Trouble, that if we cannot satisfy ourselves in these Instances, we stand in great Need of the Guidance of some other Conductor than that of our own Understanding. And to this I must also add, that in Matters of such high Importance, a wise Man cannot rest satisfied with the lowest Probabilities and Conjectures; but will justly expect, that the Principles, upon which he lays so much Stress, should be sufficiently clear and evident, and the Deductions drawn from those Principles so plain and certain, as justly to raise him to that Degree of Assurance and Comfort, which he may reasonably desire and hope to enjoy in the Discharge of those Duties.

Now how far this is the case with respect to what our own Faculties can discover to us, concerning the Method of worshipping God in an acceptable Manner, is the first part of our Enquiry. And here our natural Weakness, and want of Light will,

I apprehend, abundantly appear to every serious and impartial Enquirer. For in order to the Assurance and Comfort beforementioned, it seems necessary, that we should have a much fuller and more comprehensive Knowledge of the Nature of The God who made and governs us, as well as of ourselves and the World of Beings about us, than our own narrow Faculties can open to us; otherwise we shall never be able to collect with Certainty, which of the numberless Methods, that may be invented of worshipping that God, will be most pleasing and acceptable to Him. It is not enough to know, that He is wise, and just, and good, unless we can likewise look pretty far into His Designs in the Government of the World, and into the Nature and Consequences of Things. We will allow, that He is The Author and Governor of the Universe, and that thus much of Him may be with Certainty collected from the Things that do appear. Let it be taken for granted, that Prayers and Praises are Duties, that necessarily arise from those Relations; and that we can demonstrate both the Reasonableness and the Necessity of them. Yet still the grand Question will

recur

recur; how, and in what manner, am I to discharge these Duties, so as to be assured that what I do is well pleasing in His Sight? There are many ways of invoking and praising God; and the Point is, to be well assured, which is the true one. Has every Man a Right of Access to the Most High? or must we approach Him through the Mediation of another? Are verbal Praises sufficient Acknowledgments of His immense Bounties; or, must we dedicate a part of our Substance to Him by Vows and Oblations? If it be His Will and Pleasure, that we should come to Him through the Intercession of another; what is that Being, or who that Person, who can and will perform the important Office for us? And if the Words of our Lips are not a sufficient Return for God's great Goodness to us; of what Kind, and in what Proportion to our Circumstances, must those Offerings be, which we are obliged to make Him? Must we offer Him our Substance, or our Cattle; the Fruit of the Ground, or the Fruit of our own Bodies? And in what manner must they be devoted to Him? Are they to be consumed by Fire, or otherwise de-

ſtroyed? or are they to be appropriated to ſome particular Uſes, which will do Honour to the Almighty? Theſe are Queſtions of great Moment in this Enquiry; ſuch as muſt be reſolved, before any Man be *aſſured*, that the particular Way he chooſes, is the right and true one; and yet ſuch, I apprehend, as no one's Reaſon can reſolve, to a wiſe Man's Satisfaction. Whatever in general will beſt anſwer the Purpoſes and Deſigns of a Wiſe and Good God, in the Government of the World, muſt be allowed to be moſt agreeable to Him: But what Man will preſume to ſay, that he can fathom and underſtand thoſe Purpoſes, or determine, what means will tend moſt to promote and advance them? Many, if not all the Methods before hinted at, may be right Ways of approaching God, for ought any Man can from Reaſon demonſtrate to the contrary; and theſe, and many others, have ſo far had Authority to vouch for them, as to have been adopted and practiſed by whole Bodies and Nations of Men, in different Parts and Ages of the World. And amidſt this great Variety and Confuſion; all that Reaſon can offer for one Way in pre-

ference to the rest, must be, at best, only Opinion or Conjecture. Nay, it must, I fear, be Opinion founded on very slight grounds; a Conclusion drawn without any sufficient Premises to support it; and such as can by no Means satisfy the Doubts, and remove the Perplexities, of a serious and inquisitive Mind. The great End and Design of all religious Worship is, to please God, and to procure His Favour and Acceptance: That Favour and Acceptance must be annexed to that Scheme which is most agreeable to his Divine Will and Purposes: But what that Will and those Purposes are, cannot, I conceive, be known with any Degree of *Assurance*, but from Himself. Reason may, in many Cases, clearly prove what is *not* agreeable to a Being of Infinite Purity and Wisdom; but it cannot, when most improved, sufficiently assure us in all things, what *is*: So that the Mind must either be left to wander in endless Uncertainty; or to close in with the first Offer that suits its natural Fears, its Prejudices, or its Superstition.

Again; if Reason, unassisted by Revelation, cannot satisfy us concerning the only

true and most acceptable Manner of worshipping God, much less can it ascertain to us the Time and Measure of the Punishment He will inflict on us for our Offences; and whether by any, or what Methods that Punishment may be avoided, His Anger appeased, and the Offenders re-instated in His Favour. To do this, were entering still farther into the Secrets of the Almighty; and yet without it the Mind can enjoy no true Satisfaction or Peace. What mortal Man dares presume to prescribe Rules to his offended God; or boldly to affirm, that this or that is the Method of Atonement, which He will accept? Or what considerate Sinner can enjoy one Moment's Quiet, whilst Divine Vengeance hangs over his Head, *and the Terrors of God set themselves in Array against him*? If it *were* allowed, on the one hand, that God may forgive Sinners, on their Repentance; it *must* be granted, on the other, that He *may not*. Repentance is, at best, only avoiding *future* Offences; but is no Satisfaction to an injured Justice and Goodness for *past* Transgressions. These may be punished, though the Offender does not continue to repeat his

Pro-

Provocations. The Guilt is contracted, and the Penalty incurred, the Moment the Law is transgressed; and The Lawgiver only can make known to us the Time and Manner of the Punishment which He resolves to inflict upon the Transgressor. It is God alone that can *give* sinful Man a satisfactory *Answer of Peace*. Nothing less than a Declaration from Himself is sufficient to give Confidence to the Diffident, and Comfort to the Disconsolate. And if, then, we can neither of ourselves discover what Misery His Justice may have in Reserve for us, nor rationally enjoy any Quiet in our own Breasts without such Discovery; in how deplorable a State must wretched Mortals be left, if He has not vouchsafed them any Declarations of His Will?

That human Nature is universally corrupted and depraved, has been felt and confessed by the wisest Men in all Ages; and the Conduct of the World has ever been too plain a Proof of the Fact, to need such a Confession. Purifications and Expiations have ever made up the greatest Part of all Religions; which, how different soever in their Forms and Ceremonies, have all been

built upon the same Principles, and aimed at the same End; They have all been built upon an Acknowledgment, that the Worshippers had offended those whom they worshipped, and deserved Punishment at their Hands; And the End proposed has been, to wipe off or expiate those Offences, and render themselves fit Objects of their Favour and Protection. Hence the Washings and Mortifications of the present Heathen; hence the numberless Victims of the antient. But what *rational* End could Men have in all these vain Oblations? What Purpose can they in *Reason* be supposed to serve, exclusive of a Divine Appointment? What Merit can there be in the Blood of a Beast, to make Satisfaction for the Sin of a Man? What Consequence can there be from washing the Body with Water, to purifying the Soul from Guilt and Corruption? All is Vanity and Absurdity, if considered only as Man's Invention; there is no manner of Fitness in the Means to answer the Ends proposed; and any other Scheme that human Reason could find out, to appease the Wrath of an angry God, and make Satisfaction to Infinite Justice, would, I conceive, upon Examination,

amination, appear altogether as big with, at least, Doubt and Uncertainty, if not Absurdity and Folly. *Naaman* had at least *as much* Reason to expect to be cleansed from his Leprosy by washing in the River *Jordan*, whether the Prophet had appointed it, or not; as to cleanse his Mind from Guilt by washing in any other Water. So weak and short-sighted are our Faculties in Points so very essential to our present and future Happiness; so unable is the most penetrating Mind to find out any Method, which itself can deem reasonable, of making Satisfaction for its Transgressions!

But if the Appointment of God be taken into the Account, if He were known to enjoin these things, it would then be altogether as impious and foolish to disregard His Injunctions in the one Case, as it was in the *Syrian* to despise the Command of His Prophet in the other. The Reproach of the Servant will then stand in full Force against the Disobedience of his Master; *if He had commanded thee to do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? How much more, when He says, Wash*, or offer Sacrifices, *and be clean!* He may institute what Methods of

of Reconciliation He, in His Infinite Wisdom and Goodness, shall think meet; and, His Appointment supposed, it must become our indispensable Duty to obey, with Gratitude and Joy. He may accept of a vicarious Punishment if He pleases; and the Mind has Reason to acquiesce in His Ordinances, because to Him belongs Vengeance, or Forgiveness. But without His Commission, no Man could declare, what Atonement would be accepted; or, if he did, the Word of a Man would be but a weak Support against the Apprehensions of present and future Misery. Thus it may appear, even from the Reason and Nature of Things, how lame and defective our noblest Discoveries must be, concerning the most important Parts of Religious Worship. And this may appear in a yet stronger Light, if we proceed,

II. Secondly, To consider the Matter of Fact, as it has all along been, from the Beginning of Time; and enquire, how far human Reason has actually been concerned in all the Religions established in the World.

For

For an impartial View of them will, I believe, convince us of these two things:

1. First, That unassisted Reason, even in the falsest Religions, has never yet pretended to establish any, barely on its own Discoveries and Authority. And,

2. Secondly, That all true Religion, in all Ages of the World, has actually been derived from express Revelation.

1. First, I observe, that, in point of Fact, unassisted Reason has never yet pretended to establish any, even of the falsest Religions, barely on its own Discoveries and Authority. Though it may have gone, in many Instances, wholly on its own Strength, yet it has ever pretended to a supernatural Guidance in things relating to the Worship of God. The Lawgivers and Governors, who have corrupted true Religion, or erected false ones, have ever laid Claim, how unjustly soever, to Revelation, as the only Basis on which they could support their Designs. The antient *Egyptians* and *Greeks* had their Oracles; *Numa*, his *Egeria*; *Mahomet*, his Visions; the *Persians*, their *Confucius*; and the present Heathen have their pretended Inspirations. And into what can this universal

universal Practice, in all Ages, be resolved, but into as universal an Acknowledgement, both by the Deceivers and Deceived; that no human Capacity was able to discover, no human Power or Authority sufficient to enjoin, what was necessary to be known and done in religious Offices, in order to worship God in an acceptable Manner? This, I say, has ever been the Pretence; and the Recourse to it cannot be rationally resolved into any thing else, but a general Persuasion, that some Revelation or other was absolutely necessary to give Men an Assurance and confident Reliance, in these Matters. If Men could have been persuaded, that the superior Reason and Sagacity of their Brethren was sufficient to guide them in these things; all the Labour that Impostors and Governors took to persuade the World, that they were inspired, was so much Labour idly thrown away, and could answer no rational Purpose. And to say, that they were obliged to do this, in order to humour the Superstition of the People, without which they could not attain their Ends, is not answering the Difficulty, but acknowledging it. For it is plain from hence,

hence, that the People could not be governed in these Matters by mere human Authority. How superstitious soever they might be in other Instances; yet they believed, that no Man has Authority to invent a Religion for others, and impose his Inventions on them as the Will of God. Superstitious indeed they were, and abominable in numberless Particulars; and a View of the *horrible* things they committed under Pretence of Religion, and allowed to be *reasonable* Parts of it, will convince any considerate Person, how little Influence human Reason would again have, if left to itself, to be our sole Guide in religious Matters. If we may argue from what *has* been done, to what *would* be done, in the like Cases; we must conclude, not only, that all kinds of Iniquity and Barbarity would be committed, and every Lust indulged; but that such Abominations would be defended, and made Parts of Religion itself, as ought not *to be once named* among serious Men. And yet this is the boasted and happy Scheme, which our modern Heathens would persuade us to take in Exchange for the pure and peaceable Precepts, the comfortable

fortable and enlivening Doctrines, of our Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ*. Even they, who *might* have been *Partakers of the heavenly Gift*, and *must* have seen the good Effects of it; they, who might have *tasted of the good Word of God, and of the Powers of the World to come*; these Men even glory in crucifying *The Son of God afresh, and putting Him to an open Shame*. And though it may be justly grievous to good Men to be forced to *lay again Foundations*, when they might have hoped rather to have been *going on to Perfection*; yet so barefaced and resolute an Attack makes the Defence absolutely necessary; and a Woe must infallibly attend those, who, when the Gospel of *Christ* is thus openly blasphemed and reviled, approve not their Sincerity in the Belief of it, by appearing open and steady in its Defence.—But to return: My

2. Second Observation is, That as unassisted Reason has never yet pretended to set us any Religion of its own; but Mankind have in all Ages and Countries expected, in the falsest Religions, that they whom they worshipped would teach them their Religion themselves; so it has pleased the Al-

Almighty to comply with that Expectation, and actually to reveal every true Religion, which has ever prevailed among Mankind. In the short Narrative we have of the World before the Flood, we are fully informed, that The God of Heaven was pleased to converse frequently with the Sons of Men; and it is sufficiently evident, that the way of worshipping Him by Sacrifices, which then prevailed, was appointed by Himself. And after the Flood, it is as expressly declared, that His Communications were frequent, his Revelations clear, to the Patriarchs; till the *Jewish* Institution began to take Place by His Command: To which I need not add, that from that time to this, the *Christian* only has succeeded. This Account of the State of true Religion in all the first Ages of the World, is given us in the oldest and most authentic Records that are extant in it; and it is not begging the Question of Revelation, to quote the Writings of *Moses* in proof of these Facts; because this is only considering him as an ancient and credible Historian, which no *sensible* Unbeliever will pretend to disprove. And from him therefore we may justly conclude,

clude, that true Religion has been matter of positive Institution from the Beginning of Time.

And upon the whole, it may, I hope, have been in some measure made appear, that the great Questions concerning Religious Worship are of such a Nature, that it is past Man's Understanding satisfactorily to resolve them; that, in fact, unassisted Reason has never yet pretended to resolve them by its own Strength or Authority; but has always laid Claim to Inspiration, to support all Innovations in Religion; that Men have, in all Ages and Nations of the World, expected that those whom they worshipped would reveal themselves to them; that The True God has all along been pleased to comply with this Expectation, in the Religions He has established; and that when human Reason has acted in religious Matters without His Assistance, the Consequence only has been, to authorize and establish the grossest Corruptions, vilest Superstitions, and most abominable Pollutions, under the sacred Name of Religion.

Such

Such is the Nature of the Thing, and ſuch has ever been the Matter of fact: From whence I might draw many Concluſions in relation to the Folly and Madneſs, as well as Wickedneſs, of thoſe Men, who pretend to perſuade us to give up ourſelves to ſo weak and ſo depraved a Guide; and to reject an Inſtitution, which is the wiſeſt and moſt gracious, the moſt perfect in itſelf, and the beſt adapted for the preſent and future Happineſs of Men, that ever was vouchſafed to the World. But I ſhall conclude with only inferring theſe two plain Points,

1. The Neceſſity of a Divine Revelation, in order to give us any Aſſurance of Hope or Peace in religious Duties. And

2. The great Goodneſs of God in all Ages, in giving Men ſome clear Diſcoveries of His Will.

1. Firſt, the Neceſſity of a Divine Revelation, in order to give us any *Aſſurance* of Hope or Peace in religious Duties. Nothing but the *Teſtimony of The Lord* can be *ſure*, in what relates to His own Decrees. He alone can ſpeak Peace to the contrite; and give the penitent a well-grounded Con-

fidence that his Sins ſhall be forgiven him. The Words of Men are but as Wind; they cannot *help him that is without Power, or ſave the Arm that has no Strength. But the Words of The Lord* are infallible Words; His Declarations cannot be relied on with too much Confidence; and in the midſt of the greateſt Trouble, they will comfort, and they will *refreſh the Soul.* Whereas, without them, wretched Man has no Support, has no Portion but *Terror, and a dreadful looking for of Judgment.* And ſince ſo great was our Neceſſity, and ſince The Father of Mercies has been pleaſed to comply with it; we cannot ſurely, in the

2. Second and laſt Place, be too thankful to Him, for His Goodneſs in giving Men in all Ages ſome clear Diſcoveries of His Will. How great is the Happineſs of having Acceſs to an infallible Code of Laws, to guide our Feet in the Paths of Righteouſneſs! How great the Comfort, of being aſſured by a Voice from Heaven, that our God will heal the Sick, and bind up the Broken-hearted?

Let us then continually praiſe Him for His loving Kindneſs; and *meditate* in the Sacred

cred Volumes He has given us, *Day and Night*. Let us for ever thank Him for His most gracious Declarations of His Will; and let our *Bibles*, as they ought, be *dearer* to us than our Lives! *Let us read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them; that so by Patience and Comfort of His Holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast that blessed Hope of everlasting Life, which He has given us in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!* Which, &c.

THE NATURE, EXTENT, AND REASONS OF THE DUTY of PRAYER.

The Nature, Extent, and Reasons of the Duty of Prayer.

SERMON V.

1 THESS. v. 17.

Pray without ceasing.

THE Duty of Prayer, in general, is the Dictate of unassisted Reason, as well as the positive Command of revealed Religion. The Attributes and the Works of God entitle Him to it; and the dependent State of Man requires it. The Power of the One, and the Weakness of the other, imply an absolute Dependence; and that Dependence implies it to be the true Interest, and consequently the Duty of Man to pay it. His Beneficence, and our Obligations, demand from us the Tribute of Praise and Thanksgiving; and what so reasonable, as to apply to Him for Redress in a cala-

mitous State, Whom by happy Experience we have found to be most willing, as well as most able, to relieve us. Since He is The *God that heareth Prayers*, Common Sense will teach us, that *to Him should all Flesh come.*

And as this Duty has the Dictates of Reason to vouch for it, Revelation has in all Ages concurred in establishing the Necessity of it. In the Christian Scheme it bears a great Part. Our Lord and Master, though God of God, was Himself, when cloathed with our Flesh, frequent in the Discharge of it; and His Apostles ever laid great Stress upon it. St. *Paul* in particular not only takes the Duty for granted, as in the Text; but, in declaring the Extent of it, seems, at first sight, to enlarge it beyond its just Bounds. He is not content with advising his *Thessalonians* not to neglect so noble an Employment, but appears to expect, that they should give themselves up wholly to it. *Pray*, says he, and that *without ceasing*. In speaking to these Words, I shall consider,

I. First,

I. First, The Nature and Extent of this Duty of Prayer. And,

II. Secondly, Enquire into the Reasons why so much Stress is laid upon it in the Gospel.

I. First, As to the Nature of this Duty, its *Perfection* consists in the Elevation of the Heart, and the Resignation of the Will, to God; and in approaching Him with filial Reverence and Submission; in a word, in considering what He is, and what we are, and in acting accordingly. He, the Supreme Lord of all Things, Eternal, Infinite. We, though the Emanations of His Power and Goodness, worse with regard to Him, than if we had never been; in a State of Enmity to, and Rebellion against, Him. What Humility, then, can be great enough for such a Being in such a State? How can the Soul of Man demean itself enough in its Addresses to Him?—He, the Father that hath conducted, fed, supported, cherished us, from the Birth to the present Moment. We, *His People, and the Sheep of His Pasture*; in ourselves, helpless; and without Him,

Him, destitute and lost. With what filial Reverence and Dependence should we, then, approach Him? With what Submission and Hope commit all our Concerns to Him, and *cast all our Care upon Him, Who* thus *careth for us?*—He, Veracity and Immutability itself, and The Author of *great and precious Promises.* We, raised from *Terror and a dreadful Looking-for of Judgment*, to the glorious Hope and Expectation of future Mercy. And with what Dependence and Gratitude, then, should we pray unto Him? With how deep a Sense of His Goodness, with how strong a Confidence in His Truth, with what Joy in believing, with what an Assurance of Hope?—In a word, He, our Redeemer, our Sanctifier, our Comforter: We, redeemed from Death and Sin, and, through His Grace and unspeakable Bounties, advanced to the Adoption of Sons, and made the Heirs of God, and Joint-heirs of Heaven with The Lord *Christ Jesus.* With what Desire and *Love*, then, should we pour out our Hearts before Him? With what earnest Longings and Desires of coming into His Presence? With what Admiration of His Perfections? With what passionate Aspirings

Aſpirings and Breathings after Him? With what elevated Conceptions of His Beneficence? With what lively Impreſſions of His Love on our Minds? and with what Warmth of Affection, and earneſt Zeal for Him and His Glory?

Such, in a greater or leſs Degree, ſhould be the Humility, the Reſignation, the Faith, the Aſſurance, the Fervency, and the Love of every Chriſtian in his Addreſſes to God. Such is the Duty of Chriſtian Prayer, and its Qualifications. And our Apoſtle here tells us the Extent of it, when he requires us to *pray without ceaſing*. But it muſt certainly be contrary to the Apoſtle's Meaning, to underſtand him in a ſtrict literal Senſe; as if either the Whole of our Duty conſiſted in Prayer, or we were to do nothing elſe but diſcharge it; becauſe ſuch an Interpretation contradicts both the Nature of God and Man. It is contrary to the Nature of God to require Impoſſibilities, or, all things conſidered, Incongruities, of His Creatures; as alſo to take one Duty for another, and much leſs a Part for the Whole. It is entertaining injurious Opinions of Him, to imagine, that our Emptineſs can add any thing

thing to His Fullness, our Praises or Humiliations to His Glory; or that He is subject to human Infirmities. And it is as contrary to the Nature of Man, to suppose him capable of continual Application of Mind to any one Subject, or to suppose him not to be encompassed with Wants, or not placed in various Relations to his Brethren. His Mind must have its Relaxations and Rest, or he will never think at all to any Purpose. His relative Duties to Man must be discharged, as well as those to God; his Wants must be supplied, his Weakness cherished, and necessary Refreshments and Recreations taken in their Turn, or he will soon moulder into his original Dust; and it will soon appear, that to be in the strictest Sense ever employed in doing one thing, will be in Reality doing nothing. To *pray without ceasing*, then, must be understood in a qualified Sense: And the Restrictions, which parallel Passages of Scripture, as well as the Reason of the Thing, seem to lay upon it, are these.

1. To *pray without ceasing* may imply the keeping up in our Minds a constant Sense of the Importance of this Duty; the living,

living, as much as may be, under continual and strong Apprehensions of The Divine Presence, wherever we are, or whatever we are about; and the being ready and disposed to break out into Acts of Devotion, or apply ourselves formally and strictly to them, whenever proper Opportunities offer, and when it is consistent with the Discharge of other Duties. This is such a State of Mind, as is consistent with any Condition of Life, from the highest to the lowest; and consequently may be attained by every Christian, be the Portion of outward things here allotted him, what it will. The meanest Man, even whilst discharging the lowest Offices, may entertain just Sentiments of Him Who made and redeemed him; may be very sensible, that, however Man may treat him, The Eye of Providence sees through the Obscurity that surrounds him, beholds the Labours of his Hands, and will graciously accept and reward the honest Simplicity and Integrity of his Heart; may be well assured, that his Portion is allotted him by The Wisest and Best Judge of what is most proper for him; and hence pursue his Toils with a chearful Submission

miſſion to The Divine Will. And he may be ever ready to return Thanks for what he is, and may be, and implore the Continuance of the Divine Mercy and Protection in the beſt Manner that he can. The greateſt Prince, when employed in the moſt noble Acts, the Adminiſtration of Juſtice, or the Preſervation of whole Kingdoms, may remember; that *He That is Higher than the higheſt regardeth*, and is ever with him; may conſider himſelf only as an Inſtrument in the Hands of God, to promote the Happineſs of Mankind; and continually retain awful and reverential Notions of Him, to Whom all Hearts are open, all Deſires known, and from Whom no Secrets are hid; may be humble in Spirit, however exalted in Station; fill his Mind with deep Impreſſions of the Divine Superintendency and Direction; and often teſtify his Gratitude and Dependance in ſecret and open Acts of Praiſe and Adoration. The moſt Ignorant may know and remember, that he alſo is always in the Sight of his God. And the moſt truly Learned have the moſt Reaſon to reſolve all their Philoſophy and Abilities into Emanations of Divine Goodneſs; and ought

ought to have the ſtrongeſt as well as clereſt Conceptions of the Power, Wiſdom, and Preſence of The Almighty. And what is all this, but one Act of Piety, however varied in the outward Expreſſions of it? What is a Life led under a deep and affecting Senſe of theſe things, but one continued Series of Devotion, through the whole Courſe of it? When the Mind is ſtrongly impreſſed with theſe Sentiments, and they operate powerfully upon, and govern the Heart; the Man is in an habitual State of Devotion, however his Hands, or Tongue, or Thoughts may, at different Seaſons, be employed. And as it is every Man's Duty to make himſelf as ſenſible as he can of The Divine Preſence, and act and think as ſuitably as may be to it; this may be juſtly deemed one Senſe, in which the Apoſtle requires all Men to *pray without ceaſing*. And becauſe this State of Mind itſelf is the Work of The Divine Spirit, and cannot be acquired without Him; St. *Paul* muſt therefore mean,

2. Secondly, A Conſtancy in expreſs and formal Acts of Devotion on all proper Occaſions. It is allowed, that Acts of Beneficence

ficence and Charity, and even the Offices of a just Calling are Parts of a Man's Duty, as well as his Prayers. But then it is as certain, that Prayer is as much a Duty as any other, and a Duty of more Importance than most. And, therefore, the Discharge of lesser, can never cancel the Obligations of greater Duties; nor can our Concern for any Offices, which we owe to Man in *any* Relation, excuse our wilful Neglect of the Worship due to God; much less can the Impertinencies or Vanities of Life, a Lazineſs of Disposition, or Listlessness of Temper, alleviate the Folly and Impiety of neglecting our Addresses to Him. This were pleading one Crime in excuse for another, and adding to the Guilt of both. Acts of Devotion, then, must have their Periods, as well as other things, and be duly attended and discharged. Their Returns must be frequent, and we as constant as may be in these Returns. How often these should be, must be left to private Judgment; the Determination of the Question must depend on the Circumstances peculiar to every one's Station in the World; and every Man's Conscience will tell him, if sincerely asked, whether

whether he has been ſufficiently regardful, or criminally negligent, of this Baſis of all Chriſtian Perfection. At leaſt, it is certain, that if he has not been *frequent* and *conſtant* in his Application, both in public and private, to it; if he does not ordinarily and regularly begin and end every Day with Applications and Addreſſes to the Throne of Grace; if he does not, on every Lord's Day *at leaſt*, attend the Service of the Sanctuary, unleſs Calls of Neceſſity or Charity prevent his Attendance; he cannot be ſaid, in any tolerable Senſe, to *pray without ceaſing*. Again,

3. Thirdly, We muſt likewiſe add to our Conſtancy, Perſeverance, if we would attain to our Apoſtle's Meaning. Prayer is not to be the Exerciſe of a ſudden Fit of Devotion, or the lingering away an idle Hour which hangs heavily upon us, and we know not what to do with; but a regular and ſteady Courſe of Acts of Adoration and Praiſe to the End of Life. No fancied inward Diſcouragements are ſo to ſtop us; no pretended Growth in Virtue ſo to exalt us; no outward Calamities ſo to deject; no Flow of proſperous Events ſo to

intoxicate us; as to make us think ourſelves too good, or too bad, too little, or too great; to be obliged to purſue it. The gracious End of our Creation was Happineſs; that Happineſs is not to be attained without Applications to the Throne of Grace. Prayer is one neceſſary Means of it; and in order to attain it, or grow up to it, it will always be a Duty to *pray without ceaſing* in this Senſe, that is, to perſevere ſteadily and fervently in our devout Addreſſes to God, till He takes us to Himſelf. And indeed the Chriſtian, who can think ſlightly of this noble Exerciſe, who either can lazily and perfunctorily diſcharge it, or fancy himſelf incapable of being benefited by it, muſt know very little of the Duty, leſs of the Spirit, and, ſurely, nothing at all of the Comforts, of his Religion. Which may appear by proceeding,

II. Secondly, To enquire into the Reaſons why ſo much Streſs is laid upon this Office of Prayer in the Goſpel. And theſe are, becauſe it is the Duty, the Privilege, and the Happineſs of Chriſtians; and becauſe it is perfective of all Chriſtian Graces.

One

One Reason is, because Prayer is the indispensable Duty of Christians; it is founded, as we have seen, in the Nature of God and Man; it is the positive Command of our Lord, and is itself a necessary means of Virtue and Happiness. There never was, nor indeed can be, any Religion without it. By this is maintained the Intercourse between Heaven and Earth; and as all the Duties of Natural Religion are raised and confirmed by the Gospel, so is that of Prayer established on the firmest Basis. It is built on the surest and most lasting Principles, the Will of our Heavenly Father, and its Tendency to our present and future Bliss; not on any fancied Merit or Efficacy in the Repetition of the same Words or Desires; nor on the blasphemous Imputation of human Weakness to Infinite Perfection; but upon the Divine Commandment: not on a vain Supposition, that we can by any mere Intreaties or Importunities prevail on The Immutable and Unchangeable God, to alter the secret Purposes of His Will; but on a well-grounded Assurance, that these are some of His Purposes, That He *will give His Holy Spirit* to those that seek to Him for it; That if

we would avoid Temptation, we muſt *watch and pray* againſt it; That if we would get Wiſdom, we muſt aſk it. Theſe are as unchangeable Decrees as any other; and it is ſurely but juſt and reaſonable, that they, who would obtain the Bleſſing, ſhould be indiſpenſably obliged to ſeek it, in the Form and Manner which the Donor has preſcribed. The Compliance of an unjuſt Judge with an importunate Widow's Requeſt, was indeed parabolically propoſed by our Bleſſed Saviour, to teach us to be conſtant, and perſevere in our Prayers, and *not to faint* in them, that is, leave them off as unprofitable; but the *Parable* holds chiefly, if not wholly, with regard to the *Event*. As *certainly* as the Judge avenged this troubleſome Woman; ſo *ſurely* will God *avenge his Elect, who cry Day and Night before Him*; and the *Moral* of the Parable is, that we ſhould from thence learn to depend on His Veracity and Truth, and reſolutely perſevere in our Duty, in full Aſſurance that He will, in His own Time, hear us, though He *bear long with us*.

Another Reaſon, why ſo much Streſs is laid on Prayer in the Goſpel, is, that it not

only is our indispensable Duty, but our Privilege. If the Gospel State be a State of Covenant between God and Man; if The Blessed *Jesus* be The Author and Mediator of that Covenant; and if the Sacraments He has instituted be the Signs and Seals of it; then must they, who are thus signed and sealed, be entitled to its Privileges; and one of these Privileges is, that through *Christ we have Access by One Spirit unto The Father.* Men, in their natural and corrupted State, are estranged and alienated from God. Their unremitted Sins separate between them and their Maker, and in the Language of the Scriptures, remove them *far off* from Him. No wonder therefore, that they should not dare approach Him, but vainly seek to their fellow Creatures to intercede; and in their Approaches express the greatest Doubts, Fears, and Uncertainties. But The Blessed *Jesus* has taken down this Partition Wall, has freed us from that Spirit of Bondage and Fear, and has given us The Spirit of Adoption, whereby we approach Him with the Confidence of Children, and *cry, Abba, Father.* And this Assurance is the *Boldness* so much insisted on in the *New Testament*, as a great Advantage of the Christian Church;

and as a ſtrong Motive to the frequent Exerciſe of this Duty of Prayer. *In Chriſt*, ſays *St. Paul* to the *Epheſians*[a], we *have* BOLDNESS *and* ACCESS *with* CONFIDENCE *by the Faith of Him*; or in other Words; *we have Liberty to approach God with Confidence by the Faith which we have in Him.* —*Having ſuch an High Prieſt*, ſays the Author to the *Hebrews*, *Let us come* BOLDLY *to the Throne of Grace*[b]; and again, *Having* BOLDNESS *to enter into the Holieſt by the Blood of Jeſus, let us draw near with a true Heart and full Aſſurance of Faith*[c]. We have then a Right of Acceſs to God, through The Merits of The Immaculate Lamb; we are preſſed earneſtly to exerciſe this Right, and are commanded to be frequent in it, to give us the juſter Notions of the Importance of it. Privileges, not uſed, make very faint Impreſſions on the Mind, and ſeldom inſpire it with any deep Senſe of Gratitude; whereas the more any Advantage is enjoyed, the more ſtrongly it operates on the Soul, revives, and quickens thoſe Sentiments of Love which are due to the Author.

[a] Chap. iii. 18. [b] Heb. iv. 10. [c] Chap. x. 19—22.

And

And this I take to be one Reason, why our Lord requires us to *pray always*, and His Apostle to *pray without ceasing*. Our Privilege is a Right of *immediate* Access *to The Father*, Whom the oftener we approach, the more sensible shall we be of our Obligations to The Son. And we may just remark, how far it is consistent with a just Sense of this Privilege, to draw nigh to Him through any Creature, it highly concerns those impartially to consider, who are ever applying to His Throne, by other Intercessors, than The One Mediator between God and Man, The Lord *Christ Jesus*.

3. A Third Reason, why the Duty of Prayer is so much pressed upon us in the Gospel, is; that it is our Happiness. It often happens, that Men are encompassed and loaded with such a weight of Calamities, that either all human Assistance is out of reach, or, if attainable, proves weak and insignificant; and then, unless they can have Recourse to the Comforts of Religion, they must be utterly destitute. They have nothing to do but to give themselves up for lost, and endeavour to bury themselves in Insensibility and Ob-

livion. And what are these Comforts of Religion, but a firm Belief of its sacred Truths; an humble Confidence in the Goodness of God; and a vigorous Exertion of these Virtues, by a Resignation of ourselves to Him, in all the Acts of Devotion? In the most prosperous State, a Change *soon* may, and ere long *will* come; and whenever that shall happen, the most rich and powerful will find themselves altogether at a Loss for a Support, if they cannot with some Assurance have Recourse to Him, Who gives and takes away, in Prayer and Adoration. Nay, even in the Day of Prosperity itself, how low and empty must all sensual Enjoyments be to a wise Man, in comparison of the Satisfactions that will flow into his Soul, from *rejoicing in The Lord*, and *joying in The God of his Salvation?* How languid and lifeless, how fading and unsatisfactory all other Pleasures, when set in Competition with the inward Transports of a Mind expressing its Sense of Infinite Mercy, in humble Praise and devout Thanksgivings! The good Man then has a sure Recourse for Comfort in the Day of Distress, and superior Gratifications to any outward Emolu-

ments

ments in the greateſt Proſperity; and all this, in his Addreſſes to Heaven; either in pouring out his Heart to God, and laying open his Complaints before Him; or in the Pſalmiſt's conſtant Practice of aſcribing all to His Bounty, placing all his Dependance on His Favour, and, either in the Temple or the Cloſet, continually giving Him Thanks with his whole Heart. And if Men are utter Strangers to this; if all this be Jargon and Enthuſiaſm to them, and they can taſte none of theſe Joys; it is becauſe their Sins have ſeparated between them and their God, and they have not ſought him as they ought. Let them *break off their Sins by Righteouſneſs, and their Iniquities* by the Practice of univerſal Charity towards God and Man; and the Promiſes of God will belong to them; they will have a Right to converſe with Him, as with their Father and their Friend; and they will be ſenſible, that He has in Goodneſs required them to *pray without ceaſing*, becauſe it is as well their Happineſs as their Duty.

4. Fourthly and laſtly, there is yet another Reaſon, why ſo much Streſs is laid on the Duty of Prayer in the Goſpel; becauſe it is perfective

ſective of all Chriſtian Graces. The peculiar Graces of the Goſpel are Faith, Hope, and Charity; and every devout and fervent Prayer does not only tend to promote theſe Virtues, but is the actual Exerciſe of them. The Addreſs itſelf implies a Faith in Him to Whom it is made; the Fervency of it is founded in firm Dependence on His Promiſes and Veracity; and its Reſignation, in an Admiration of His Goodneſs, and a Love of His Infinite Perfections. And whoever is growing in theſe Graces, muſt, with due Care and Application, make a proportionable Progreſs in all other Virtues, and the ſubduing thoſe Luſts that war againſt the Soul. Humility is ſo nearly allied to Devotion, that they are almoſt ſynonymous Terms. Heavenly-mindedneſs, that is, the raiſing our Hearts from this World to a better, and *ſetting our Affections on Things above, not on Things on the Earth*, muſt be the Effect of converſing often with God in Prayer; and univerſal Charity and Benevolence to Men muſt be improved and heightened by every ſincere Act and Exerciſe of Love to God. So that Prayer, by its natural Tendency, as well as by Divine Appoint-

Appointment, and Blessing, and drawing down the Aids of The Holy Spirit, is a necessary means of assisting us in going on to Christian Perfection. It will improve our good Dispositions into Habits of Virtue; it will strengthen our Weakness, and confirm our Strength; and the Earnestness, with which it is pressed upon us, is, therefore, itself an Instance of the Riches of that Goodness, which is wonderfully displayed throughout the whole Oeconomy of our Salvation.

To conclude, then, such is the Nature, such the Extent, and such the Reasonableness of this Christian Duty. Its Perfection consists in a resigned Will, and an inflamed Heart; its Obligation extends to the frequent and constant Discharge of it; and its Expediency, or rather Necessity, in order to our Peace and Tranquillity, and Growth in Grace, render us utterly inexcusable, if we neglect it. From all which I would only draw this single Inference; That as nothing can make up for the Contempt of it, and as he must be very little more than a nominal Christian, who can be *content* without it; so there is nothing in the Nature of

of it, or in the Christian Manner of enjoining it, which can excuse our placing the Whole of our Religion in it, or lead us to think, that our Attendance upon this, will excuse our Neglect of other Duties. It is required of us, not as a Benefit to the Almighty, but to ourselves, and a Means to qualify us for other things: We are taught, that all Acts of Sacrifice are to give way to those of Mercy, when both cannot be performed; and the general Rule of Practice, with regard to the Frequency of Prayer, seems, therefore, to be this; That we ought so to attend upon it, as will best prepare, qualify, and assist us for and in the other Duties we owe to God, our Neighbours, and ourselves; and that we ought so to regulate all our other Duties and Concerns, of whatever kind, as to leave ourselves Time and Opportunities enough to join often in this Act of Communion with the Saints on Earth, and to discharge the Obligation, and enjoy the Happiness of Conversing daily with The God of Heaven, and becoming acquainted with Him in Privacy and Retirement.

The

The Nature of

WORSHIPPING GOD IN SPIRIT and in TRUTH.

The Nature of worſhipping God in Spirit and in Truth.

SERMON VI.

JOHN iv. 23.

But the Hour cometh, and now is, when the true Worſhippers ſhall worſhip The Father in Spirit and in Truth: For The Father ſeeketh ſuch to worſhip Him.

THE Woman of *Sichar* or *Sichem*, in the Country of *Samaria*, with whom we find our Bleſſed Saviour converſing in this Chapter (and who by the Circumſtances of this Story ſeems to deſerve a better Character than ſhe is generally ſuppoſed to have had) no ſooner diſcovers Him to be a Prophet, but ſhe deſires Him to reſolve the great Queſtion, upon which the reciprocal Hatred of the *Jews* and *Samaritans* was

was in a great meaſure founded. She deſires Him to inform her, whether Mount *Gerizim* in *Samaria*, or Mount *Zion* in *Judea*, was the true Place which God had choſen to put His Name there; and conſequently, whether the Worſhip paid by the *Jews* in the Temple on the one Mountain, or that paid by the *Samaritans* on the other, was moſt acceptable to God, and that which He did require. To which our Lord anſwers, That the *Samaritans* did not ſufficiently underſtand even The Object of their Worſhip; whereas the true Knowledge both of Him and His Religion was to be learnt only from the *Jews*. *Ye Samaritans worſhip ye know not what; we know what we worſhip; for Salvation*, or, the ſaving Knowledge of The True God and His True Religion, *is of the Jews*[a]. And, leſt ſhe ſhould be led by this Determination in Favour of the *Jews*, to conceive too high an Opinion even of their Worſhip, and think it unalterable; our Gracious Redeemer is pleaſed to inform her further in the Words of the Text, that the Time was coming, yea already come, when the Wor-

[a] Chap. v. 22.

ſhip

ſhip of God ſhould neither be confined to any Time or Place, whether in *Judea* or *Samaria*, nor conſiſt in the preſent Rites and Obſervances of either People; but ſhould be acceptably offered up to God at any Time, and in any part of the World, provided it was directed to its proper Object, and paid with a true and ſincere Heart. *But the Time cometh, and now is, when the true Worſhippers ſhall worſhip The Father in Spirit and in Truth: For The Father ſeeketh* or requireth *ſuch to worſhip Him*; that is, He from this time commandeth all, who would worſhip Him as they ought, to worſhip Him in that manner. So that theſe Words ſeem plainly to contain a ſhort and comprehenſive Deſcription of the Nature and Manner of Chriſtian Worſhip, as it was to be eſtabliſhed by Him, Who was then come to preach it to the World, and as it was to ſtand diſtinguiſhed both from the *Jewiſh* and the *Samaritan*. *The Hour cometh*, ſays He[a], *when ye ſhall neither in this Mountain nor at Jeruſalem worſhip The Father*; that is, when neither the Worſhip that you pay Him here, or the *Jews* there,

[a] Chap. v. 22.

ſhall be the Worſhip that He will appoint and accept; but it ſhall be of a different kind, and offered up to Him in a different way, it ſhall be a Worſhip *in Spirit and in Truth*, for ſuch He will require. Now, in order the better to underſtand the Nature of this our Chriſtian Worſhip, and the Meaning and Import of theſe general Expreſſions, it ſeems neceſſary to enquire,

I. Firſt, to what this *ſpiritual* and *true* Worſhip is oppoſed; and,

II. Secondly, Wherein it conſiſts.

I. Firſt, we are to conſider, to what this *ſpiritual* and *true* Worſhip is oppoſed: And this Oppoſition ſeems, from the Context, to be extended to theſe three Particulars.

1. Firſt, to all blind and ſtupid Adoration, which is founded in Ignorance either of the Object or Manner of Divine Worſhip; which was the caſe of the *Samaritans*.

2. To a purely ritual and ceremonial Worſhip; which was the caſe of the *Jews*. And

3. To all Worſhip, which is wholly, or chiefly confined to Externals, which was the caſe of both.

1. First, it is opposed to all blind and senseless Devotions, which are founded in Ignorance either of The Object, or the true Manner of Divine Worship; which was the case of the *Samaritans*. Indeed, for want of more particular Accounts than we at present have of the *Samaritan* Worship, as practised in the time of our Blessed Saviour, it is not so certain as might be wished, whether the particular Facts, to which our Lord alludes in this Censure, respected only The Object or the Manner of it: But whether the Crime or Crimes were only in one, or in both of these Particulars; the things condemned seem plainly to be the Ignorance, Stupidity, and Impiety of the Worshippers. The Words, *Ye worship ye know not what*, appear at first Sight to imply, either that they idolatrously worshipped as Gods those things that were not so; or that, if they worshipped The True God, they did it in Ignorance of His Attributes, and in Unbelief; or that they, very inconsistently and stupidly, worshipped both Him and Idols together. But nevertheless, the Words may very justly, and with good Reason, be understood of the *Manner* of their Wor-

ſhip itſelf; as implying, that though they then worſhipped The True God alone, yet it was under ſuch Appearances, or with ſuch Rites, as ſhewed that they did not underſtand His Nature; or at leaſt, that they did not worſhip Him in the Way and Manner that He Himſelf had commanded, as the *Jews* did; and therefore, in compariſon of the greater Light, and better authorized Ordinances of the latter, might juſtly be ſaid not *to know* Him. So that there is Reaſon to interpret the Words in all theſe Senſes; and perhaps not ſufficient grounds abſolutely to reject either of them: And whether we adopt one or all of theſe Interpretations, the Import of the Condemnation will ſtill in Effect amount to the ſame thing, the Ignorance and Falſhood of the *Samaritan* Worſhip. If they worſhipped Idols or falſe Gods, with or without The True God, their Crime was the Idolatry and *Falſhood* of that Worſhip. They, in the Language of the Prophets *made Lies their Refuge*[a]. If they worſhipped the True God, without knowing Him, or under ſuch Appearance, or in ſuch a Manner as was unworthy of Him;

[a] Iſai. xxviii. 35.

their

their Crimes were that Ignorance which they might have removed, and the Indignities they offered Him, becauſe of ſuch their Ignorance. And the Chriſtian Worſhip is oppoſed both to their Ignorance and their Errors; and is on theſe Accounts ſtiled a Worſhip *in Truth*. It is a Worſhip paid to the *True* God, and to Him only, in Oppoſition to all *falſe* Objects of Adoration: It is a Worſhip founded in a true Knowledge of this *True* God, in Oppoſition to all erroneous and miſtaken ways of approaching Him: It is a Worſhip *truly* ſuitable to His Divine Nature and Attributes, and therefore worthy of Him, and well-pleaſing to Him: And it is a Worſhip paid Him in the *true* Manner which He Himſelf requires, that is, with a true and ſincere Heart.

And from hence it may be obſerved, that they, who would become ſuch Worſhippers of The Father as He ſeeks under the Chriſtian Diſpenſation, muſt firſt inform themſelves aright of His Nature and Attributes, and then apply themſelves to Him, in the way that is moſt agreeable to that Knowledge. So that Ignorance can

never be the Mother of a right Christian Devotion, can never tend to improve it. Of Superstition and numberless Errors, it may be, and is, the Parent; but the pious Christian, who would be truly devout, must build his Devotion on a true Knowledge of Christian Truths; and must offer up His Praises and Adorations in the way, that the Sacred Writers of the *New Testament* require. He must first *know What he worships*; and then worship Him, as *in Truth* He is. And as the *spiritual* and *true* Worship of a Christian is thus opposed to Ignorance and Error, either as to The Object or the Manner of it, so is it likewise

2. To a purely ritual and ceremonial Worship, such as was that of the *Jews*. The Rites and Ceremonies of the *Jewish* Law, had their Use and Necessity, when instituted by God, and were well adapted to the Purposes for which He designed them. But when The *Messiah* was come, and had fulfilled them; those Reasons ceased, and the Things themselves, from being serviceable, became noxious and prejudicial to the true Religion. Great Numbers of Rites and external Observances are like

like Clogs and Fetters upon the Soul. They employ the Mind too much on themselves, and divert it from attending to the more weighty and important Matters of the Divine Law. They naturally lead Men to acquiesce in these Ceremonies, and to think themselves better and safer than others, purely on their account. They likewise tend to instil very unworthy Sentiments of The God Who is worshipped, as if He delighted in vain and trifling things, or could be pleased with Pomp and Ostentation, or was confined to Time or Place. And these being directly contrary to the Design and Tendency of the Christian Doctrine, it was necessary that the Christian Worship should be purified from them, and fenced in and distinguished only by a few plain, and useful Rites; such as were best suited to its divine Nature, and would contribute most to its main End and Design. And therefore we continually find our Lord and His Apostles setting the Christian Law in Opposition to the *Jewish*, and representing the one as no less superior in Worth and Excellence to the other, in all Particulars, than the Soul is to the Body. Thus the one

is called the *Shadow*, and the other the *Substance*; one is styled *Flesh*, and the other *Spirit*; the Institutions of the former are termed *carnal Ordinances*, *slavish*, and *beggarly Elements*; the Precepts of the latter, a pure and holy Commandment, which gives both Liberty and Life; and in this Sense, the Christian is required, by our Great Master, in the Text, to worship The Father *in Spirit and in Truth.* And for the same Reasons, that the Christian Worship is here opposed to the ritual and ceremonial Worship of the *Jews*, it is likewise opposed,

Lastly, to all kinds of Worship whatever, that are chiefly, or wholly confined, to Externals; which was the case both of the *Jewish* and *Samaritan*. These People, like their *Pagan* Neighbours, placed the Essence of Piety in the Multitude, Order, and Pomp of outward Ordinances; and when these were discharged in due Form, this was deemed to convey a Right and Title to the Divine Favour. Though they worshipped The True God, and with the Ceremonies which He Himself had appointed, yet by resting in these only, and not once considering their spiritual Meaning, they were

were in this Instance guilty of the same Fault as the Heathen; that is, they adhered too much to the Outside or Shell of Religion, and neglected or lost the Substance. They *made the Law of God of none Effect*, by their manner of observing it; and when they assumed most of the *Form of Godliness*, they were least affected by *the Power* of it. So that the Commandment was literally to them *a dead Letter*; it produced not its genuine and proper Effects upon their Minds; they were rather the worse than the better for it; and in Reality practised nothing less than true Piety and Devotion. To these false Appearances therefore is opposed the *Truth*, to these bodily Exercises the *Spirituality*, of the Christian Worship: And all Dependance on the Merit or Value of such outward Performances of any kind, is much more blameable in the Church than in the Synagogue; because the Nature of real internal Piety is now more fully explained, and its Necessity more strongly enforced.

It is not then the Length of our Prayers, or the mechanical Motion of our Lips or Bodies in the Repetition of them, that can make

make them acceptable in the Sight of God; it is not any bare Act of Worship, though of Divine Institution, which can recommend us to His Favour; but the Dispositions of the Mind and Heart with which it is performed. These only can render it a *spiritual* and *true* Act of Devotion, without which it can have no real Value and Acceptance.

Some Forms and Ceremonies in the Public Worship of God are absolutely necessary, and of great Edification and Use. Decency and Order cannot be preserved without them; and if they are few, plain, and expressive, they are of general Benefit and Instruction. And such as these cannot be here condemned by our Lord, because they were agreeable to His own Practice and Institutions. But when they become numerous, improper, and burdensome, they enervate the Force of true Piety on the Mind, or rather totally divert Men from it. And when once Devotion degenerates into Formality, and Piety into Pharisaical Appearances, or mere outward Prostrations and Mortifications, and rests there; the *Spirit* and *Truth* of both is lost: And such are not the

the *Worſhippers whom The Father ſeeketh.* These muſt act upon very different Motives, and with very different Diſpoſitions. Which we come now to prove, by ſhewing,

II. Secondly, Wherein this *ſpiritual* and *true* Worſhip of a Chriſtian conſiſts. By which Worſhip I underſtand in general, *our raiſing or uniting our Minds to God in ſuch Acts of Adoration, as He has commanded, and with ſuch Diſpoſitions and Qualifications as He requires:* And conſequently it muſt comprehend theſe three Particulars; an Elevation of Mind, Sincerity of Heart, and Purity of Life.

1. Firſt, This *ſpiritual* Worſhip conſiſts in *an Elevation of the Mind to God in ſuch Acts of Adoration as He has commanded.* If it be not ſuch an Addreſs to God as He has commanded, it is not ſtrictly a true Act of Worſhip; and if the Mind be not intent upon it, and active in it, it is not a Worſhip *in Spirit.* If either Part of us be the Man, it is the Mind; Our Thoughts are, if I may ſo ſpeak, the proper Actions of the Mind: And to fix them on The Object of our Adoration, with due Attention

and

and Affection, and to expreſs them in ſuitable Words, is that ſpiritual Worſhip which our Great Redeemer requires. This only is true Devotion; without which there is no real Intercourſe between the Soul of Man, and his God. Forms of Prayer may be frequently repeated, and outward Acts of Adoration performed, and yet the Man be ſo abſent from himſelf, as ſcarce to be conſcious of what he has been doing; and then is all this, at beſt, but empty Sound, or mere Mechaniſm. It has no more of religious Worſhip in it, than the Motions of a Machine, or the tinkling of a Cymbal; nor can it be accepted as ſuch by an All-wiſe God, Who ſees into the Thoughts and Intentions of the Soul. *God Himſelf*, ſays our Lord in this Place, *is a Spirit*, and therefore you muſt pay Him a ſpiritual Worſhip. He is incorporeal and infinite in His Eſſence; He is not confined to this or that Mountain, or limited to any Periods of Time; He will receive the Addreſſes of His faithful Servants, at all Times, and in all Places; provided they pay Him a *real* and ſpiritual Worſhip, by the immediate Application or Elevation of their Spirits

rits to Him, with inward Piety and ſtrict Attention. The Matter of our Worſhip muſt be in ſome meaſure ſuitable, or agreeable to the Spiritual Nature of God; and the Manner of paying it muſt be ſuch, as becomes the *Spirit* of a Man. That is, it muſt not be wholly the Act of the Body, but principally of the Mind; we muſt raiſe up our Thoughts to Him, fix them intently upon Him, and then lay open our Complaints before Him. The outward Part of the Sacraments only excepted, our Lord has confined our Chriſtian Worſhip to thoſe rational and ſpiritual Acts of Duty, Prayer, and Thankſgiving; whereby we acknowledge our own Vileneſs and Unworthineſs, and the Divine Authority and Perfections; repreſent our Wants and Diſtreſſes to The Father of all Spirits, and implore His Aſſiſtance and Comfort; intercede with Him for our Brethren, ſo far as we are in Duty and Charity obliged; and expreſs our Senſe of paſt and preſent Mercies, with Gratitude and Joy. But none of theſe can be duly and acceptably performed, unleſs we ſeriouſly conſider the Duty we are upon, and labour to diſcharge it with ſuch Diſpoſitions,

as

as are most agreeable to the Nature and Dignity of it. It must be *spiritually* done; that is, in this Sense also, with all the Seriousness and Attention of which we are capable; and it must be *truly* what it pretends to be, a *real* Prayer, Confession, Intercession, or Thanksgiving. And, therefore, I add it, as another Particular implied in worshipping The *Father in Spirit and in Truth*, that it must be done,

2. Secondly, With Sincerity of Heart. *Truth* is, with great Propriety, often opposed to Insincerity, in the Sacred Writings; because every hypocritical and insincere Man, is so far a Liar. He acts Lies, if he does not speak them; and, by pretending to be what he is not, the Deceit may be as great, or perhaps greater, and of more fatal Consequence, than if he affirmed what he knew to be false. And if all Falseness and Deceit be odious and criminal in our Intercourse with one another; how much more so, in our pretended Addresses to The God Who made us? To worship Him *in Truth*, then, must necessarily signify, our doing it with honest and sincere Hearts; our being in Reality, what we pre-

tend

tend to be, ſtruck with a deep Senſe and Sorrow for thoſe Sins, which we lament and confeſs; full of Dependence and Truſt in That Providence to Which we commit ourſelves and our Concerns; ſtedfaſt in the Belief of thoſe Doctrines which we ſolemnly affirm; warmed with that Charity, to which we lay Claim, when we pray for our Brethren; and animated with Love and Joy at the Remembrance of thoſe Inſtances of the Infinite Goodneſs of God, for which we magnify and praiſe Him. Unleſs we are, in ſome degree, thus affected and diſpoſed, our Worſhip is no better than a ſolemn Mockery of Him to Whom we offer it; it is *the Sacrifice of Fools* [a], *who conſider not that they do Evil*, and therefore pretend to *draw near to God with their Mouths*, though *their Hearts are far from Him*. Without this, we impiouſly offer Him a Sacrifice, which He deteſts; and prophanely rob Him of the Worſhip, which alone He loves.

For if there be any thing in the Services of ſinful Man, which may be acceptable

[a] Eccleſ. v. 1.

or pleasing to The Most High God, it can be only the Dispositions and Affections of the Heart that offers them. These alone can make our Offices a reasonable Service, or fit to be offered up to an Intelligent Being. For it is chiefly our Motives and Designs, that denominate any of our Actions good or bad, rational or irrational; and these Motives and Designs are no longer really and truly such, than while the Head and Heart are both influenced and actuated by them. Thus, to pretend to inform Omniscience of our Condition, by our Prayers; or to add to the Glories of Infinite Perfection, by our empty Praises; were equally blasphemous and absurd. But to lay open our Hearts before Him, in Obedience to His own Commands, well becomes the Authority of God, and the Subjection of Man. To apply with Fervour to the Throne of Grace for Assistance and Relief in Temptation, in full Assurance of Faith, well becomes our Dependance upon His Promises and Veracity. To resign up ourselves, and all we have, to His Disposal, with true Humility and a sincere Acquiescence in His Will, must be acceptable to Him

Him (if any Act of Man can be so) because it is the strongest Testimony that can be given of our loving Him *with all our Hearts, and Souls, and Strength.* This indeed is exerting our Faculties to the true Honour of God, in the best manner that we can; but to join in His Worship without this *Simplicity and godly Sincerity*, cannot be the Homage which our Lord requires, because it is not acting agreeably to His Nature, or to our own. Would we then praise God acceptably? it must be with grateful Minds. Would we have our Prayers *avail much?* they must be *effectual and fervent.*

Lastly, Another Particular implied in the *spiritual* and *true* Worship of a Christian, is, Purity of Life. *I will wash my Hands in Innocency, O Lord*, says the Royal Prophet, even under the *Jewish* Dispensation, *and so will I go to Thine Altar.* Not content with the external Washings and Cleansings which the Law requires, I will apply myself to that inward Purification to which all these Rites allude, and will cleanse my Heart from the Pollutions of Sin; for this is the true Preparation for Divine Wor-

ſhip. And agreeably to this, the poor Man that was born blind, obſerves, that *God heareth not Sinners, but if any Man be a Worſhipper of God, and doth His Will, him He heareth.* This then is at leaſt a neceſſary Qualification for the Worſhip of The Father; and may without Impropriety be deemed even a part of it. It is not indeed an immediate Addreſs to Heaven by Prayer and Supplication, or with the Voice of Praiſe and Thankſgiving; but it is that Obedience, which is *better than Sacrifice*, and preferable to *the Fat of Rams.* One great Deſign of our Prayers and Praiſes, and of the Divine Aſſiſtance that is promiſed to us, is to make us *better* Men; to keep up in our Minds the ſtrongeſt and moſt lively Impreſſions of the Relation we ſtand in, to our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier; and both to lead and enable us, to become daily more and more perfect, *as our Father Who is in Heaven is perfect.* Obedience then, as ſuch, is doubtleſs the moſt acceptable kind of Worſhip; but no Man can be obedient, as he ought, without Prayers and Praiſes; becauſe they are a neceſſary and indiſpenſable Part of Duty. Beſides, the Sincerity of our

Petitions implies earnest Endeavours on our own parts to obtain the things we ask. To pray for a Blessing on our Callings, without an honest Industry in them, is to contradict ourselves. To ask of God Forgiveness of Sins without repenting of them, is to insult Him. To desire His Grace, without concurring with it, is to mock Him. So that an holy Life and a devout Mind are inseparable; and the true Worship of God must be understood to include both. It is not confined to the Closet or the Temple, but extends to all the parts of our Lives; and requires that our whole Demeanour should be uniform and consistent, as becomes the Worshippers of so Pure a Spirit, and is *worthy of that holy Vocation wherewith we are called.*

Thus we see wherein the Essence of true Piety, and the Value of Christian Worship does properly consist; not in the Number or Formality of our religious Offices, but in the inward Dispositions of the Mind and Heart; not barely in the outward Exercise of these Duties, but in them as producing good Effects in our Lives and Conversations. And the plain Inference that evident-

ly follows from the Whole is, that we ought to apply ourselves with equal Care to all the Parts of it.

Let us then seriously resolve not to worship in Word or Form only, *but in Spirit and in Truth.* Whenever we approach God, let it be with sincere Humility, strict Attention, and inward Fervour. And let us not be content with joining to the Fruits of our Lips the good Dispositions of our Hearts; but let us also *offer and present ourselves, our Souls and Bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively Sacrifice unto Him.* By this means we may become *such Worshippers as The* FATHER *seeketh*; and may be entitled to all that Assistance, Indulgence, and Comfort from Him, which He has promised us for His Sake, through Whom alone, all our Devotions and good Works will be heard and accepted, *Jesus Christ* our Lord.

THE

THE

NATURE and HAPPINESS

OF

GOD'S

Government of the World.

The Nature and Happineſs of God's Government of the World.

SERMON VII.

PSALM xcvii. 1.

The Lord reigneth, let the Earth rejoice, let the Multitude of the Iſles be glad thereof.

Or, as we have in the other Tranſlation,

The Lord is King, the Earth may be glad thereof, yea the Multitude of the Iſles may be glad thereof.

IT is very juſtly objected againſt the falſe Pretences of thoſe who chuſe to account for the Origin and Continuance of things, by any Methods rather than by giving God

the Glory of them; that their Schemes, how different or inconsistent soever, yet do all agree in this, that they would rob Mankind of the most valuable Comforts in Life, and tend to overwhelm a considerate Mind with Melancholy and Disquiet.—For what more shocking Thought can the Mind of Man entertain, than that all Events depend on the capricious Humours and Passions of Men?—What can be more injurious to Mankind, when encompassed with so many Evils, than to rob them of the Protection of The most Wise and Powerful Being, Who Alone is both able and willing to defend them?—Daily Experience is too sad a Proof how little were to be expected from our Brethren, were all things at their Disposal; and those Men must have been unthinking, or happy to an extraordinary degree, who have not found their Want of such Comforts as it is beyond the Power of Man to give; and which nothing can supply, but a chearful Dependance on an All-wise, All-powerful, and Good God, both as The Author and Preserver of the Universe.—And with Reason, therefore, do all wise Men call for the clearest Evidence,

dence, in Proof of those Principles, which would deprive them of so great a Treasure; with Reason do they require the strictest Demonstrations, to induce them to give up Religion, and the Pleasures of it. — But on the contrary, every atheistical Scheme yet invented, appears, upon Examination, to be as big with Absurdity as Disquiet; whilst the wise Man's daily Experience and Observations shew him the Power of his Maker in every Part of the World, and His Providence in all the Events of it. — The Royal Psalmist, who experienced as many and as great Changes in Life, as most who went before, or have come after him, was thereby the more confirmed in his Dependance on his God; Whose Justice or Mercy he beheld in every Dispensation.—And from a just Sense of his Obligations flows all that Warmth and Zeal for God's Glory, which so often bursts out into Praises and Acclamations; and makes him scarce ever mention the Name of his God, but with Gratitude, or any of His Works without Thanksgiving.— *My Soul*, says he, *shall always declare the Loving Kindness of The Lord; and my Mouth be shewing forth His*

Praise from Generation to Generation.—He calls upon all Nations to *enter into the Courts of The Lord of Hosts with Joy*, and *come before His Presence with a Song*; Who is The Author of our Being and Preservation, and to Whom we belong, as *His People, and the Sheep of His Pasture.*—And here, in the Text, we find Him calling upon the Inhabitants of the remotest Corners of the Earth, to *rejoice*, and *be glad* with him; because The Lord is their Governor and Guardian, and they equally the Objects and Partakers of His Divine Care and Protection.—*The Lord is King*, says he, *the Earth may be glad thereof*; yea, all the Inhabitants of *the Multitude of the Isles* may, ought, or have Reason to *be glad thereof.*—Which Words naturally lead us to consider these two Particulars:

I. First, The Meaning, and the Certainty of the Truth here asserted, that *The Lord is King*. And,

II. Secondly, The Justness of the Inference here drawn from it, that therefore *the Earth may be glad*, and *the Multitude of the Isles*, or the Inhabitants

tants of the most distant Parts of the Globe, have equal Reason to rejoice and *be glad thereof*.

I. First, We are to consider, what is meant by *The Lord's being King*.—By which I understand, not so much His Dominion, as His Providence; not so much His Right of disposing of the World, or His Power of governing it, as the actual Exercise of that Right, the constant exerting of that Power in the Government of it. His Right of disposing of His Creatures does plainly appear by His having made them; His Ability to support, is plainly consequent upon His Ability to create: And this actual exerting that Power and Right in a Providential Care and Support of them, which is the Effect of His Infinite Goodness, is very evident from His own Declarations concerning it, and from the visible Proofs of it, which appear in the World. Insomuch, that to place The Supreme Being in a State of Inactivity and Unconcern, as neither directing nor influencing the Affairs of this Life, is not only inconsistent with His Attributes, but is, in effect, to live

live without God in the World. It is, as to all the Purposes of Religion, the same thing with denying His Being; and, being as injurious to Truth and Virtue, is, therefore justly thought an Impiety equal to Atheism itself. The contrary of which is what the Psalmist here asserts; where, by *God's being King*, he must be understood to mean, His Super-intendency, Direction, Influence, or Permission of all Occurrences and Events whatsoever; that He sits at the Helm of the Universe, and governs the Whole, and every Part of it; that all the great Changes and Revolutions in the World are owing to His Providence, and directed by it; that, with regard to us, He is the Distributer of Good and Evil, Success and Disappointment, of which every good Man reaps the Portion which is best for him; and, in a word, that it is He Who governs us, and our Affairs, with Wisdom, Justice, and Mercy; and, as He judges best, gives to this Man Empire and Dominion, to that Poverty and Distress. *The Lord is King.*

The Certainty of which Truth is, I conceive, best founded on His own Word; though we may daily discover very evident

Traces

Traces of it in the ordinary Course of things; and though most Histories are full of Relations of many surprising Events, which are no otherwise to be rationally accounted for, than on the Supposition of it. If we consider the Accounts which the Sacred Writers give us of it, we may there discover many Instances of the Secrets of Divine Providence; and not only trace Events to their First Cause, but learn the Motives by which He is pleased to be influenced in the Direction of them. We are there taught, that *Righteousness and Judgment are the Habitation of His Throne*; and that His End, in the great Variety of His Ordinances and Dispensations with us, is to execute Vengeance, or shew Mercy, to the Sons of Men. We there see Him punishing the Rebellions of a whole World at once; and when the Number of their Iniquities was completed, the Windows of Heaven were opened, and the Fountains of the great Deep broken up, to overwhelm them with Destruction. We there see mighty Monarchies raised by Him, to be Executors of His Vengeance; and little States supported and prospered, as Instances of His Goodness. We there see mighty Armies

Armies become weak and unſucceſsful, and little ones victorious and triumphant, as He directed and approved. We there ſee His Government of His People, through all the Changes and Revolutions of it; how they were, at one time, beyond Oppoſition ſucceſsful; at another, beyond Redreſs calamitous; as He ſupported or deſerted them; and how Piety was always attended with Proſperity, Diſobedience with Adverſity; till at length their Stubbornneſs and wilful Blindneſs, in crucifying the Lord of Life, brought on their wonderful Diſperſion among the Gentiles, from which their Impenitence has not yet ſuffered them to be recalled. In a word, we find The Almighty there deſcribed, as the Great Monarch of the Univerſe, and all the Princes and Governors of the World (as well as the Powers of Nature) as His Agents and Inſtruments; all acting in Subordination to Him, and carrying on, whether they deſign it or not, thoſe Purpoſes of His Providence, for which He has raiſed them. That ſo it might from thence appear, that He is the Mighty God, *the Lord of Hoſts*; and that, with regard to all

all the Affairs of Life, the greatest and the smallest, it is He, the Lord, who finally and ultimately does, or permits all these things.

Strong Characters of which Truths are likewise very visible, even in the common Occurrences of private Life, to every one who considers them with Seriousness and Attention. If a Man, who has run through but half the ordinary Stage of human Life, would retire, and take a serious View of the past Events of it; would recollect the Dangers he has escaped, and the Success he has met with; the Evils he has suffered, and the Good he has or might have enjoyed; and consider the Means whereby they have been brought about, the little visible Dependance of one thing upon another; he must, I am persuaded, find great Reason to acknowledge The Hand of God to be the Director of them, and great Cause to admire The Wisdom Which governs all things, and to adore with Gratitude The Goodness That surrounds him. The Helplesness of Infancy, and the Dangers of Youth; the Weakness of Man's natural Powers when in their greatest Perfection, and the Narrowness of his Understanding

ſtanding when moſt improved; are ſuch, as ſhew him to be utterly unable to foreſee the Miſchiefs to which he is hourly expoſed, or, having foreſeen, to prevent them; and therefore oblige him to acknowledge, that his Safety muſt be owing to a much Greater Power than his own; and to look up with Pleaſure and Submiſſion to the *Lord*, as his *Keeper*, Who preſerves both *his going out and coming in.*

And if we would enlarge our view from private to public Concerns, and reflect on the great Tranſactions and unexpected Changes which moſt ſurprize and aſtoniſh Mankind; if we could look narrowly into the Counſels and Powers, whereby Governments are immediately ſupported, and the Means, whereby Peace and Order are preſerved in them, there is great Reaſon to preſume, that we ſhould be forced to conclude, that human Power and Wiſdom have little to do in the Management of them, otherwiſe than as ſubordinate and inſtrumental to The Divine. For how often have the wiſeſt and moſt laboured Schemes of human Policy been diſconcerted and brought to nought, as in a Moment?

ment? How fine has been the Thread, how ſeemingly trivial the Events, upon which the Fate of Empires has depended? How oft have the ſmalleſt Governments increaſed and flouriſhed; whilſt their powerful Neighbours, who, humanly ſpeaking, might have ſwallowed them up, have themſelves declined, and come to nought? In how continued a Series have Weakneſs and Power been mutually ſucceeded by each other, in all the various Governments of the World; becauſe The Almighty had fixed their Bounds, which they ſhall not paſs, and ſaid, *Hitherto ſhall ye come, and no farther?*—How often have human Policy, and human Power been both foiled, in the ſudden Changes every Kingdom has felt; and how ſurpriſing has been their Succeſs, who have engaged in thoſe Changes, when the Attempt, if judged of by the common Maxims of human Wiſdom, has ſavoured of little elſe than Madneſs and Diſtraction? Almoſt every Hiſtorian furniſhes Relations of this kind, and almoſt every Age produces freſh Inſtances of it; and all theſe ſtrongly imply a Direction more than human, and evince clearly the Superintendency of

That Divine Wisdom and Power, Which can alone foresee the most distant Tendencies and Consequences of Things, and therefore can alone direct all to the Ends of His great and various Dispensations; and model, govern, or change the whole, according *to the secret Purposes of His Will.*

Besides which, few Histories are wanting in giving us Instances of an inferior Kind, wherein The Arm of God has been so bare, and His Interposal so visible, that every Tongue has confessed it. His Judgments on great Crimes and abandoned Men, have been sometimes so signal and remarkable, that the most wicked have been obliged to acknowledge the Hand that wrought them, and the Purposes for which they were intended.

And if we join spiritual things to earthly; if we compare the ancient Prophecies of future Events with the historical Accounts of the Facts themselves; their exact Agreement in minute Particulars, and the surprizing Harmony and Coincidence of Things, will evince The Divine Agency and Interposal in the Direction of our Affairs, with a Force which is not easily to be resisted.

ſiſted. Such a Review muſt fill every conſiderate Mind with joyful Acknowledgments of The Divine Providence and Goodneſs; ſince as they demonſtrate by What Spirit thoſe Prophecies were dictated, ſo likewiſe, by Whoſe Superintendency thoſe Events were directed.—Such an Harmony between the Prediction and the Event, can only proceed from That Infinite Wiſdom and Power, Which can ſo order and direct the Circumſtances of Men and Things, as ſhall effectually influence them in their future Actions, and induce them, without any Violence to their natural Freedom, to prefer ſuch only, as are beſt accommodated to teſtify His Truth, and fulfil the Purpoſes of His Government.—And, upon the whole, the Inference is very plain and very certain, that no other Wiſdom and Power can ſo govern the World, but thoſe which firſt *made it ſo faſt that it cannot be moved*; and that therefore, in this Senſe, *The Lord is King*. And that our Happineſs in being under the Government of His Providence may be as evident and as well underſtood, as the Certainty of it; I now proceed to the

Consideration of those other Words of the Text,

II. Namely, *The Earth may be glad thereof, yea, the Multitude of the Isles may be glad thereof.* And that this Inference from the foregoing Truth is most just and reasonable, is very evident from these Considerations.

1. That to God's Superintendency we are chiefly indebted for all the Benefits we receive from Civil Government. And

2. That from Him are derived all that Influence and Power which Religion has upon the Minds of Men.

By one of these we are defended against the open Violences of some Men; by the other, against the corrupt Inclinations and predominant Passions of all.—To Civil Government we owe our Protection and Safety, so far as by a wise Infliction of just Severities, it guards us against the Ravages of Plunderers and Oppressors; and to Religion we are indebted for our Preservation from secret Mischiefs, and for Relief and Assistance in our Distresses. And well therefore may *the Earth rejoice* in His Dominion, to

Whose

Whose Disposal of Things we are obliged for them; with Reason ought *the Multitude of the Isles to be glad* under His Government, Who thus exercises His Power and Authority in Acts of Mercy and Indulgence to them.

1. I observe that to God's Superintendency we are chiefly indebted for all the Benefits we receive from Civil Government; and that therefore we ought to rejoice in His Dominion and Providence, as the Fountain from whence they flow. The natural Strength of Men is pretty equal, and is in its utmost Extent confined within narrow Limits; and his Policy, how extensive soever, can reach no farther than his Knowledge, Prudence, and Foresight will give leave. And as all these reach only to very few of that infinite Variety of Objects and Accidents, in which every Government is nearly concerned, and on which it does more or less depend; they can therefore guard only against some of those Dangers, to which all human Authority is exposed; and must leave the rest to That Divine Protection, Which can alone extend Its Care to all, and most effectually supply the Defects

of human Wiſdom. The public Enemies of a Government, by being ſuch, have their Attempts guarded againſt or repulſed, with the greater Eaſe and Certainty; the great and known Defects or Dangers, to which every Community is expoſed, by being very viſible are the leſs formidable; and the ſupplying them, or guarding againſt them, is the more within the Power of Man; and the common Cauſes and Methods of public Diſturbances and Diſorders, together with the Remedies of them, as they may be pretty well aſcertained by Reading, Obſervation, and Experience, may therefore be the better allowed to be within the reach of human Policy and Wiſdom. But beſides theſe, innumerable are the Events, which it is impoſſible for the wiſeſt of Men to foreſee, and which may be as deſtructive to Government as they are unknown; and our Safety from theſe muſt be therefore imputed to a Superior Guidance, Which influences and directs the Whole. The Inclinations of Men are univerſally corrupt, and their Paſſions ſtrong and predominant: The Intereſts of the Multitude are ſuppoſed very different from thoſe of their Superiors: And it is granted

granted to be much within the Power of any daring Villain to disturb Society, who shall be desperate enough to despise the Hazards of the Attempt, or think them equalled by the Advantages of it in view. And, therefore, the conquering of this Corruption, and the subduing of these Passions; the Guidance of the Multitude contrary to their Interests, and generally contrary to their Inclinations too; the preventing the more frequent Execution of such destructive Designs, as might be as various as the Wit of Man could invent, and as secret as his own inward Sentiments; this is surely a standing Miracle of Divine Goodness; a visible Demonstration of the Interposal of His Infinite Power and Wisdom, by Whom *Kings reign, and Princes decree Justice.* And the Psalmist, therefore, ranks the Support of human Government amongst the plainest Proofs of God's Power and Providence, and sets these Wonders of the political, and the most surprizing Phænomena of the natural World, upon the same Level.—*Thou stillest*, says he, *the Raging of the Seas, the Noise of its Waves, and the Madness of the People.* He resembles the Fury of the Rabble to the

raging Sea; thinks the restraining them equal to that wonderful Proof of God's Power and Authority, which we see in His governing the mighty Waters; and intimates, that He alone can with Certainty prevent the Ravages of the one, Who can say to the other, with Authority and Success, *Peace, be still.* And as we are thus indebted to The Supremacy of Heaven for all the public Advantages of Society, so are we likewise,

2. Secondly, for all the Blessings of private Life.—To That is owing not only the Support of Civil Governments, but likewise that Power and Influence which Religion has upon the Minds of Men; and from these Influences proceed those Offices of Humanity, Compassion, and Charity, without which, Life would be very grievous to a great Part of Mankind. The Appetites of Men, if unrestrained, would be very voracious, as their Wants are pressing: Corrupt Nature would prompt us to pursue our Ease and Pleasure by any Methods, and to scruple no Acts of destroying or hurting one another, if they led the way to the advancing our Interest, or gratifying our Lusts. And the restraining the inordinate Prosecution

tion of them, and preventing any ſecret evil Conſequences from them, is what Religion only can effect. Human Laws can extend no farther than the outward Action; all the Good they can work upon obſtinate Villany is only to force it to lurk in Secret. But the Divine Laws reach to the inmoſt Thoughts, and, when duly obſerved, not only reſtrain the outward Action, but reform the Man.—They teach Men to be good upon Principle, and ſhew them the Advantages of ſecret Virtue; and therefore, if they have any proper Influence, it operates on the Heart, not the Hand; it chains down the Affections themſelves to Piety, and cannot fail of exciting them to follow after Holineſs, when it has firſt made them in love with it. And wherever we find it to have theſe Effects, and taſte in Men's Converſations the bleſſed Fruits of it; they are to be aſcribed to God's Dominion and Government of the World, and to the Divine Influences of His Holy Spirit. By theſe, Men are enabled to diſcern and know wherein their true Happineſs conſiſts, are convinced of the Folly of ill-gotten Poſſeſſions or unlawful Pleaſures, and are perſuaded

ſuaded to prefer future and diſtant Glory, to preſent, though proſperous Iniquity.— And though, with reſpect to the Whole, few may be thus ſincerely influenced, yet much of Men's preſent Happineſs is owing, to the Effects of Religion on the Minds of thoſe few; without which we ſhould degenerate into the ſavage Barbarities of thoſe Countries, where theſe Effects are wanting, and where therefore nothing but Deſolation and Cruelty prevail. Whereas the genuine Fruits of true Religion, are a diſintereſted Juſtice, Integrity, and Fidelity to one another; to this it is owing, that Power and Oppreſſion do not always go hand in hand; and that Men often neither overreach nor deceive their Neighbours, when they have Opportunities to do both, or either, with Impunity. Humanity itſelf is a Divine Impreſſion, which The Creator has ſtamped upon us to unite us to one another; and His revealed Laws require us to cultivate and improve it, into the moſt noble Spirit of univerſal Love and Beneficence to all within our reach. Upon theſe Principles, the Poor become faithful and ſerviceable in Inſtances which human Power could not ex-

tort from them; and the Rich liberal and bountiful, beyond what the Laws of Man could require; and both are indebted for the great Benefits they receive, to God's Government and Direction, Whose Laws and Interposition produce these happy Effects. And as these all, without Distinction, are thus universally concerned, it is the Duty of all, with one Heart and one Mouth, to proclaim their just Sense of it. — Let *the Earth rejoice* in The Divine Protection, and *the Isles be glad* in That Providence Which supports them; and let every Man, in his respective Station, shew his Gratitude to his Preserver, by diligently attending to the Duties of it. Let the Poor and the Unsuccessful consider, that their Portion is from God, and that He requires a chearful Obedience and humble Resignation to His Divine Will and Pleasure. Let the Rich and the Powerful always remember, that it is God's Providence, Which has given them these Distinctions; and that He requires they should be applied to promote His Glory, and the general Welfare of those, who are, in Nature, their Equals, and, in Religion, their

their Brethren. And let us all, whether High or Low, Rich or Poor, rejoice in every proper Act of Duty and Thanksgiving, to our Common Father and Preserver, *Whose Dominion is Everlasting, and His Praise above Heaven and Earth.*

THE

THE

Scripture Notion

OF

GLORYING,

And the Insufficiency of

Earthly Enjoyments

To be the

OBJECTS or FOUNDATIONS of it.

The Scripture Notion of GLORYING, and the Insufficiency of earthly Enjoyments to be the Objects or Foundations of it.

SERMON VIII.

GAL. vi. 14.

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the World is crucified unto me, and I unto the World.

THE blessed Apostle *St. Paul*, whose Conversion to the Faith was extraordinary and miraculous, appears constantly to have borne in Mind the most strong and lively Impressions of the Mercies then vouchsafed him; and seems desirous of demonstrating, on all occasions, that he was not a *whit behind the very best of the Apostles*,

Apoſtles, but that, in Love and Zeal for Chriſtianity, *he laboured more abundantly than they all.* He ſeems fond of every Opportunity, of ſhewing us his Love, and Joy, and Delight in the Goſpel of *Chriſt*; and thereby gives us a moſt glorious, and moſt ſtimulating Example, *to provoke us to good Works*, and *to walk ſo, even as he walked.* His Unworthineſs in having perſecuted the Church of God, ſeems to have been ever in his View; he is earneſt to convince the World, that what he then did againſt her, was done *in Ignorance and Unbelief*, and with a ſincere, though miſtaken, Deſire of promoting the Glory of God; he now redoubles his Zeal, and exerts a greater Fervency and Warmth of Affection on her Behalf. No Appearance of Honour or Succeſs to Chriſtianity could ſhew itſelf, but he exults and triumphs; no Means of promoting the Knowledge of the Goſpel could be preſented, but he deſpiſes all Danger, and contemns all Sufferings, in the Purſuit of them: Nor would he ſuffer a Hint to drop, or a Word to eſcape, that could well lead him to it, but he immediately burſts out into Joy, and declares his Reſignation,

and

and his Love. When *Agrippa* tells him [a], That the Force of his Eloquence, and the Fervours of his Affection for his Saviour had *almost* persuaded him to be a Christian, he rejoices in his bare Inclinations to Christianity, and cries out, *I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this Day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these Bonds.* When he was at *Cesarea*, on his Journey to *Jerusalem*, and it was there foretold by a Prophet, that he should be imprisoned by the *Jews*; and the Disciples therefore besought him not to go up thither, for fear of the Sufferings he might endure [b]; *What mean ye*, says he, *to weep, and to break mine Heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but to die at Jerusalem, for the Name of The Lord Jesus.* And in this his last Chapter to the *Galatians*, of which the Text is a Part, the very mention of the Word *glorying*, seems to have given Fire to his Zeal, and made him break out into the passionate Declaration of the Text, wherein he declares, That there was nothing for him to glory in, but the Cross of *Christ*; or in other Words, that

[a] Acts xxvi. 28. [b] Chap. xxi.

as to all earthly Enjoyments and Sufferings, *none of these things moved him, neither counted he his Life dear unto him, so that he might finish his Course with Joy*, and *the Ministry which he had received of The Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the Grace of God.*

The general Design of this Epistle was to oppose the Attempts of some Judaizing Christians, who would have brought their Brethren again into Subjection to the Law of *Moses*, from which the Gospel of *Christ* had made them free; and to recover those who had been perverted by them. And St. *Paul* therefore labours throughout the whole to convince them, *that they had*, by The Son of God, been *called unto Liberty* [a]; and to persuade them, *to stand fast in that Liberty* to which they had been called, and *not to be entangled again with* that *Yoke of Bondage* [b], *viz.* the numerous Rites and burdensome Ceremonies of the Law, which had been too great a Burden for the present *Jews*, or their Fathers to bear. And here, in the Close of this Epistle, he tells them, that the Design of those, who would enslave

[a] Gal. v. 13. [b] Chap. v. 1.

them,

them, was as weak and wicked, as their Works were slavish and unchristian: And that their true Purpose, was neither to promote God's Glory, nor their Salvation, but either to avoid Suffering for the *Christian* Cause, or that they might rejoice and boast of their Success in the *Jewish*. *As many*, says he, *as desire to make a fair Shew in the Flesh*, that is, to put on the Appearance of great Regard and Concern for the outward Observances of the Law, *they constrain you*, or, they declare it necessary for you, *to be circumcised, only lest they should suffer Persecution for the Cross of Christ. For neither they themselves, who are circumcised, keep the Law; but they desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your Flesh*; that is, that they may boast of your Subjection to the *Jewish* Ceremonies, and particularly the *Circumcision of the Flesh*; as the Effect of their Zeal and Love for the Law. The mention of which false Glorying in the *Jewish* Rites leads our Apostle tacitly to condemn it, and to declare what alone is the true Glorying of a Christian, and wherein it consists; which he does in his own Person, and in the Words of the Text: *But God forbid that I should glory,*

ſave in the Croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, by Whom the World is crucified unto me, and I unto the World.

In the Explanation and Application of which Words, I propoſe to purſue this Method.

I. I ſhall endeavour to ſhew the full Extent and Meaning of the Word καυχαομαι, which we here render *glorying*, in Scripture.

II. To ſhew, how far our Apoſtle may be underſtood to reject all earthly Enjoyments, as improper Subjects for a Chriſtian's Glorying; when he ſays of them, with ſuch a Zeal and Indignation, *God forbid that I ſhould glory* in them.

III. To declare, in what Senſes *the Croſs of Chriſt*, or *Chriſt crucified*, is the true, and only proper, Object of the ſincere Chriſtian's Glory. And

IV. Laſtly, to explain the Reaſons why it is ſo; which are implied in the laſt Words of the Text, namely, becauſe *thereby the World was crucified unto him, and he unto the World.*

I. The

I. The first thing is to shew the full Extent and Meaning of the Word καυχαῦς, which we here render *glorying*, in Scripture. Now the first Sense, in which it is used, is to signify the setting a great Value and Esteem upon any thing we enjoy; or upon ourselves for the Enjoyment of it. The *Jews* were well known to set so great a Value upon the Law of *Moses*, and upon themselves for the Use of it; that they thought themselves righteous, and all other Men wicked upon that account only; and the greatest Obstruction, and Stumbling-block they found in the way to Christianity, was their extravagant Zeal for, and Esteem of it. Which Esteem our Apostle, in his Epistle to the *Romans* [a], expresses by this Word καυχαῦς. *Thou*, says he, who καυχασαι, or as we render it, *who* MAKEST THY BOAST OF *the Law*, that is, who settest the greatest Value and Esteem upon it, *through breaking the Law, dishonourest thou God?* And describing the haughty *Jews* in the former Part of that Chapter, *Behold*, says he, *thou art called a Jew, and* REST-

[a] Chap. ii. 17, 23.

EST *in the Law*, that is, placeſt thy Confidence in it, and καυχασαι, BOASTEST THYSELF of God; that is, valueſt thyſelf as being peculiarly His Child, and in Covenant with Him, while all other Men are, for the want of knowing Him, Reprobates and Sinners. And our Apoſtle, ſpeaking of the Difference between the Covenant of Works and that of Grace, and ſhewing the utter Inconſiſtency of them, ſays of *Abraham*, the Father of the Faithful, in the fourth Chapter of this Epiſtle [a], *And what ſhall we ſay then, that Abraham, our Father, as concerning the Fleſh, hath found? For if* Abraham *were juſtified by Works, he hath* indeed καυχημα, he hath, as we render it, *whereof to glory*; he hath then juſt Cauſe and Reaſon to ſet a Value upon himſelf and his Performances, as making himſelf righteous; *but not* at all *before*, or *to God*. His Juſtification, in this caſe, muſt be the Product of his own Care, and Diligence, and Obedience, and Perſeverance in his Duty, and he might then juſtly ſet a Value upon it, and upon himſelf as the ſole Author of it, but has no extraordinary Obligation

[a] v. 1, 2.

to

to God, or Acknowledgments to pay Him for it. And thus again, our Apostle, speaking of the *Thessalonians*, in his Second Epistle to them [a], says, *so that we ourselves* καυχᾶσθαι, as we have it, *glory in you, in the Churches of God, for your Patience, and Faith in all your Persecutions, and Tribulations which you endure.* They had shewn great Courage and Constancy in their Adherence to the Faith, notwithstanding the Torments they endured for it; and, therefore, our Apostle says, that he, and those that were with him, *gloried* in them, that is, had the greatest Regard and Value for them, as the faithful Soldiers and Servants, of *Christ Jesus.*

Another, and the most common Sense, in which this Word is used in Scripture, is to signify this our Value of ourselves, or what we enjoy, in Words, and to boast of it. For when our Apostle says of our Justification and Salvation, that *it is the Gift of God* [b]; and is *not* the Fruit *of* the Works of the Law; *lest any Man should* BOAST: When speaking of his own and other Mens

[a] Chap. i. 4. [b] Eph. ii. 8, 9.

Labours in the Gospel, he tells the *Corinthians* [a], that he *would not* BOAST *of things beyond his Measure*; and afterwards adds [b], *But he that glorieth*, or boasteth, *let him glory*, or boast, *in The Lord*; *For not he who commendeth himself, is approved*; *but whom The Lord commendeth*: When he exhorts them to *shew before the Churches the Proof of their Love, and of his* BOASTING *on their Behalf*; and tells them [c], *he sent the Brethren to them, lest they should have been ashamed of this same confident Boasting*: When speaking of his own Diligence among them, and of the great Care he took not to be burdensome to any of them, he says, *As the Truth of Christ is in me, no Man shall stop me of this* BOASTING *in the Regions of Achaia*: In these, and many other Passages in St. *Paul's* Epistles, where we use the Word *boasting*, or *glorying*, in a Sense synonymous to it, the original Term is either καυχαᾶς, or some Derivative from it.

Lastly, Another Sense, in which this Term is used in Scripture, is, to signify,

[a] 2 Cor. x. 13. [b] ℣ 17, 18. [c] 2 Cor. ix. 4.

not

not only the Value we set upon ourselves, or any imagined Advantage we have over others; or our expressing that Value in Words; but likewise to express the Joy, Complacency, and Delight which we find in the Things so valued. St. *James*, speaking of the great Blessings of Christianity, says, as we translate him, *Let the Brother of low Degree rejoice, in that he is exalted*, namely, by being made a Member of *Christ*, and an Heir of the Promises. St. *Paul*, speaking of his Success among the *Corinthians*, says [a], *We are your Rejoicing, as ye also are ours, in the Day of The Lord Jesus.* And he calls the Victory of our Faith, *The Confidence, and the* REJOICING *of our Hope* [b]: And says of himself, with respect to his Ministry, *Our Rejoicing is this, the Testimony of our Conscience, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity, we have had our Conversation in the World* [c]. He advises the *Philippians* [d], *To do all things without Murmurings and Disputings*, that he might *rejoice in the Day of Christ*,

[a] 2 Cor. i. 14. [b] Heb. iii. 6. [c] 2 Cor. i. 12. [d] Phil. ii. 14. 16.

that he had not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. And in the former Part of this his sixth Chapter to the *Galatians*, speaking of the future Reward of Virtue, he says, *Let every Man prove his own Work, and then he shall have rejoicing in himself, and not in another. For every Man shall bear his own Burden.* In all which Places, and several others, the Word καυχαομαι and its Derivatives are still used, and that plainly to signify the inward Complacency and Satisfaction of Mind, which we have in the Contemplation of what is valuable in us, or what we think to be so. So that to *glory*, according to the just Meaning of the Word in Scripture, signifies either to have an overweening Fondness and Value for any thing we possess, or for ourselves for the Possession of it; or to express that Esteem in Boasting and vain Words; or to place our greatest Pleasure and Delight in the things so possessed. In none of which Views can the present World, or any of its Enjoyments, be the proper Subject of our Glory. It can never deserve so great Degrees of Veneration and Love; can never be a just Foundation for Haughtiness of Spirit and undue

Elevation of Mind; can never authorise the Insolence of Praise and Boasting; can never furnish out such pure and unspotted Delights, as the Mind of Man naturally aspires after, and in which alone it can acquiesce. But there are other more noble and unmixed Enjoyments vouchsafed us, even here, by The Good Providence of God, which the World can neither give, nor take away; which we can never be too fond of, or take too much Delight in; whose just Commendations no Words can equal; and which can never satiate or deceive us. And with respect to these, St. *Paul* applies the Words of the Text, and says of himself, *But God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the World is crucified unto me, and I unto the World.* Which, for the better Application of it to ourselves, leads me to the second Particular beforementioned, namely,

II. To shew, how far our Apostle may be understood to reject all earthly Enjoyments as improper Subjects for a Christian's *glorying*, when he says in such general Terms,

Terms, and with ſuch a Zeal and Indignation, *God forbid that I ſhould glory* in them. *Theſe Deceivers*, ſays he, *deſire to bring you back to the Slavery of the Law, that they may glory in their own Succeſſes and your Weakneſs: But God forbid that I ſhould glory; far be it from me, to place my Eſteem or my Affection, my Glory or my Happineſs, in any terreſtrial Advantages or Diſtinctions whatſoever; either in perſonal Qualifications, or external Emoluments; or in any thing, but the ſpiritual and ineſtimable Bleſſings, which are derived to me from the Croſs of Chriſt.* An Indignation in itſelf truly great and noble, and highly worthy of His Apoſtle, *Who, though He was in the Form of God*, and it was *no Robbery* in Him *to* make Himſelf *equal with God, yet humbled Himſelf, and took upon Him the Form of a Servant, —and became ſubject unto Death.* An Indignation which is worthy of the Magnanimity of the Goſpel, and to be imitated and aſpired to, by all who profeſs it; and which is more immediately incumbent on all thoſe, who *preach Chriſt crucified unto the World, to the Jews a Stumbling-block, and to the Greeks Fooliſhneſs.* An Indignation, wherein

St.

St. *Paul* tacitly condemns all that Glorying in others, which he disclaims with so much Vehemence himself; and implicitly excites us to shun and avoid it, since we all *ought so to walk, as we have* him *for an Example.* Now the Reasons and Foundations, the Restrictions and Limitations with which he may be understood consequentially to condemn our Glorying in the World, seem to be all contained in these few Reflections.

1. That neither the World, nor any of its Enjoyments, can deserve an undue Place in our Affections and Esteem.

2. That neither can they ever be a just Cause for Pride and Vain Glory. And,

3. That much less, therefore, can they merit our Regard, as the End of our Conversations, and the Reward of our Labours.

1. First, One thing, which may be implied by St. *Paul*, in the Text, is, That neither the World, nor any of its Enjoyments can deserve the first Place in our Affections and Esteem. He cannot, with any Justice, be understood to condemn the bare Use of these things, since *all the Creatures of God*, and all the Dispensations of His Providence,

are,

are, in Themſelves, *good*, and the proper Subjects of Praiſe and Thankſgiving; nor can he, without great Violence to Reaſon and Religion, be interpreted to imply the abſolute Neceſſity of that actual Renunciation of all worldly Goods, in all Ages of the Church, which the State and Condition of it made neceſſary at its Publication to the World. He ſpeaks not of the Uſe or Abdication of our Advantages, but of the *not glorying* in them; and can, therefore, only be underſtood of the immoderate Place we give them in our Affections and Eſteem; of the extraordinary Degrees of Admiration and Love which we beſtow upon them; and of the extravagant Methods we take to obtain and enjoy them. His Doctrine, I conceive, is, That neither the Honours, Pleaſures, nor Profits of the World, are ſo valuable in themſelves, or ſo beneficial to us, as to deſerve to engroſs our Affections; that they are in themſelves empty and unſatisfying; are the *Idols* only of low and narrow Minds, and are much beneath the glorious and exalted Views of a Chriſtian; that the trueſt Judgment to be formed of them, is only to conſider them as *Wells in*

this

this Vale of Misery, that is, only as Refreshments in our Passage through it; and that we are to chuse The Great Object of our Desires beyond all these, and *to seek first the Kingdom of God, and His Righteousness.* And, indeed, to whose Experience might we not appeal for the Emptiness of human Glory, the Dissatisfactions of earthly Pleasures, and the Insufficiency of Riches to our Happiness, if considered in themselves? To whom might we not appeal for that Care and Sollicitude which they bring with them; that Uneasiness and Anxiety, that Dissatisfaction and Disappointment, which attend them; and that Vexation and Restlessness of Spirit, which often shew themselves amidst the most plentiful Portions of them? Can *the Eye be satisfied with seeing* these things, or *the Ear with hearing them?* Whence, then, is Contentment so very rare, as well as so very excellent a Virtue? The Reason is, that we set no Bounds to our Appetites and Desires; are, notwithstanding any present Enjoyments, still warm, and active, and vigorous, in an earnest Pursuit after more; and place our Rest and Happiness in the

Success

Success of those Pursuits, which we seem resolved shall never end but with our Lives. All which is placing too much of our *Glory* in them; and is, I fear, approaching too near to the Case of those in *St. Paul's* Time, *who*, he says, *were Enemies to the Cross of Christ; whose End was Destruction*, because *their God was their Belly*; and *who gloried in their Shame*, because, beyond all the Bounds of Reason and Religion, *they minded earthly Things*.

Another Particular, which we may understand to be implied by St. *Paul*, I conceive, is, that as no worldly Acquisitions or Enjoyments can deserve so much of our Application and Love; so neither can any of them be a just Foundation for Pride and vain Glory. If, as some wise Men among the Ancients reasoned, nothing can be in itself truly great, the Contempt of which really is so; and if nothing be a greater Proof of the Greatness of Mind, than a sincere Contempt for all outward Advantages, any farther than they are necessary; the inevitable Consequence from thence is, that nothing which is in itself contemptible, can, without great Absurdity, create Vanity in us, and raise us to a high

a high Opinion of ourſelves. It was their Opinion, that tho' our ſenſual and earthly Promotions and Enjoyments had been perfectly pure and unmixed, yet they would ſtill be too low, and unworthy of the Mind of Man; and we need no Authority to affirm, that in the State, in which they at preſent are, there is ſuch a Mixture of Imperfection, Uneaſineſs, and Corruption, in the greateſt Abundance of them, as might reaſonably humble us in the midſt of them, and prevent any Elevation of Mind, and Contempt of others, from ariſing from them; and therefore, ſays the Son of *Sirach*, *Pride was not made for Man.* He has, when in his greateſt Glory, and in greateſt Plenty, ſuch Clouds of Weakneſs, Vanity, and Corruption perpetually ſurrounding him, that Pride will ever ſit aukwardly and ridiculouſly upon him; and is like ill made Habits upon ill ſhaped Bodies, which all the Glitter and Richneſs in the World will never make to look agreeably and gracefully upon them. *Where then*, as our Apoſtle argues in Spirituals, *is Boaſting* in any temporal things? *It is excluded. By what Law?* By the Laws of Nature, Reaſon, and Revelation; which

all tell us, That *when Pride cometh, then cometh Shame*; and that *with the Lowly*, in the most exalted State, *is Wisdom*.

Lastly, If then the World, and its Enjoyments be so imperfect and mixed, that they can never in Reason warrant our highly valuing ourselves for the Possession, or despising others for the want of them; much less therefore can they deserve to be considered by us, as the End of our Conversations, and the Rewards of our Labours. There is something noble and divine in the Soul of Man, which is ever prompting us to enlarge our Views, and renew our Pursuits; and will never suffer us to acquiesce and rest satisfied, till we arrive at Perfection itself. And whoever, therefore, seeks present Profits, Pleasures, or Promotions, in Expectation that they will satisfy the Cravings of his Mind, will ever find himself mistaken and disappointed. He toils for Vanity, and labours for the Wind; he expects more from the World, and its Favours, than it is in the Power of the World to give; and he *glories* too much in it, by placing his Joy and his Happiness there. This inward Thirst after Peace and Happi-

ness is only to be allayed with Purity and Eternity; what falls short of this, will never thoroughly content us; and the main End of our Labours ought therefore to be looked for beyond all fading and momentary Attainments; our Taste should be raised from temporal to spiritual Enjoyments; and our greatest Joy and Delight be fixed to those Pursuits only, which will end in the highest *Glory, Honour, and Immortality.*

Thus we see, in what Sense the Word *glorying* is used in Scripture, and how far it may well be understood to be rejected and condemned by St. *Paul*, when applied to the fading, uncertain, and imperfect Pleasures of Life; that it signifies to set a great Value and Esteem on ourselves, or what we possess; to be proud and boast of the Possession of them; and to take our greatest Delight and Satisfaction in them; and that we then glory *too much* in the Things of the World, when we suffer them to monopolize our Affections and Desires; when we permit them to puff up and exalt our Minds; and when we place our Happiness and Peace in them.

The moſt plain and obvious Uſe of which is this: That we hence learn, to reſtrain our Appetites, and moderate our Deſires; to fix them on proper Objects, and direct them in their Purſuits; ſo to uſe the World, as not abuſing it; ſo to enjoy its Benefits as not reſting in them; but to partake of the good Things God gives us here, with Thankfulneſs and Moderation; to humble ourſelves in His Sight, and deſpiſe none of our Fellow-Creatures; to raiſe our Thoughts from theſe ſhort and tranſient Bleſſings, to thoſe ineffable and never-ending ones, which He has in Reſerve for them that love Him; to place our final Peace and Happineſs in theſe only; and ſo to ſeaſon all our Words, and Actions, and Purſuits with Wiſdom and Prudence, as that they may all tend to, and center in, this one great Point, the eternal Salvation of our Souls.

This was the great Deſign of God in creating us; this was the great End of our Lord and Maſter in dying for us. *The Kingdom* which He has purchaſed, and to which He calls and invites us, *is not of this World*, which is unworthy of us: He is gone

gone into Heaven before us, and sitteth *at the Right Hand of the Majesty on high*, and *is there preparing a Place for us: And God forbid*, therefore, *that we should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the World is crucified unto us, and we unto the World.*

THE CROSS of CHRIST THE ONLY SUBJECT OF A CHRISTIAN's GLORY.

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The Croſs of *Chriſt* the only Subject of a Chriſtian's Glory.

SERMON IX.

GAL. vi. 14.

But God forbid that I ſhould glory, ſave in the Croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, by Whom the World is crucified unto me, and I unto the World.

THE Method I propoſed to purſue, in treating of theſe Words, was this,

I. To ſhew the full Extent and Meaning of the Word καυχᾶσθαι, which we here render *glorying*, in Scripture.

II. To ſhew how far our Apoſtle may be underſtood to reject all earthly Enjoyments,

joyments, as improper Subjects for a Christian's Glorying, when he says, with such a seeming Indignation, *God forbid that I should glory in them.*

III. To declare in what Senses *the Cross of Christ*, or *Christ crucified*, is the true and only proper Object of the sincere Christian's Glory. And

IV. Lastly, To explain the Reasons why it is so; which are implied in the last Words of the Text, namely, because *thereby the World is crucified unto me, and I unto the World.*

The two former of which Particulars having been already considered, I now proceed to declare, in the third Place, the several Senses in which the *Cross of Christ*, or *Christ crucified*, is the true and only proper Object of the sincere Christian's Glory. Which will, I apprehend, fully and undeniably appear, if we consider The Blessed and the Crucified *Jesus*, in these several Views; as

1. Our Redeemer. 2. Our Conqueror. 3. Our Instructor. 4. Our Lord. 5. Our Inter-

Intercessor. 6. Our Comforter. 7. Our Judge. And 8. Our Hope.

The first of these Titles is what is particularly intimated in the Text: The others follow in a great Measure from it: And all may very fitly be considered by us on this Subject.

In every one of these Views, His Benefactions to us are inestimable, the Honours done us are most valuable, and the Joys that flow from Him are inexpressible: And in all these Senses, therefore, He is the *true* and *proper* Object of the sincere Christian's Glory, in every scriptural Sense of the Word *glorying*; whether we understand it to signify, our setting a great Value and Esteem upon Him, or our boasting of Him and His Benefactions to us, or our placing our Delight and Affections most strongly and immoveably upon Him. And He is likewise the *only* proper Object of our Glory, because He *alone* can deserve the first Place in our Affections and Esteem; He alone can be a sufficient Foundation for Praise and Boasting; and He alone can give such Happiness to us, as may deserve to be considered by

by us, as the End of our Converſations, and the worthy Reward of our Labours.

1. The firſt View in which I conſider *Chriſt crucified*, as the proper Object of our Glory, is that of His being *our Redeemer*.

But before I proceed herein, it is neceſſary I ſhould obſerve, that St. *Paul*, by ſaying he glories in *the Croſs of Chriſt*, means not to pay any Regard or Honour (much leſs a religious one) to the Wood on which *Chriſt* ſuffered, but to Him only Who ſuffered upon it. For though this Way of ſpeaking is ſo common in Converſation and Writing, and the uſe of Metaphors is ſo well known and familiar, that it may ſeem trifling to obſerve, that our Apoſtle uſes one here; yet what might otherwiſe ſeem needleſs and impertinent, is by the Practice of the Church of *Rome* made to be of the utmoſt Conſequence and Importance to be reminded of. The many ſolemn and ſuperſtitious Uſes to which Croſſes are by her applied; and particularly her groſs and ſhocking Idolatry, in ſpending good Part of her ſolemn Offices on *Good Friday*, in expreſsly and idolatrouſly *bowing* and *ſinging Hymns* to *the Wood*

Wood of the Croſs itſelf [a]; theſe Practices are too melancholy a Proof of the Neceſſity of guarding againſt any ſuch Interpretation of our Apoſtle, as might make him give any ſeeming Countenance to Cuſtoms ſo abſurd and abominable; andconſequently of obſerving, that no more is intended in theText than what our Apoſtle declares in other Words to his *Corinthians*, when he tells them, that *he determined not to know any thing among them, ſave* The Lord *Jeſus Chriſt, and Him crucified* [b].

The crucified *Jeſus*, then, is the proper Object of our glorying, and that, in the firſt Place, as He has redeemed us from the Wrath of God, and the Puniſhment of Sin. He has paid the Price of our Redemption. We, who before were alienated from the Life of God, and in Enmity with Him, are now no longer the Veſſels of His Wrath, but are reconciled to Him by the precious Blood of His Dear Son: God becomes Man, that Men might become the Sons of God; He humbles Himſelf, that we might be exalted; He dies, that we might live. And

[a] See the *Roman* Miſſal on *Good Friday*.

[b] 1 Cor. ii. 2.

in whom then ſhould be our Glory, but a dying Saviour? of whom ſhould be our Boaſting, but The Lord of Life?

Vain and Fruitleſs were all the weak Attempts of ſinful Man, vain in themſelves were all the Sacrifices and Oblations of the Law, when applied to appeaſe the Wrath of an angry God. The Author of Nature can neither *eat Bull's Fleſh, nor drink the Blood of Goats:* A God of Purity could never be appeaſed by impure and imperfect Offerings: Nor could any Labours of a weak and ſinful Creature make Atonement for the Offences he had once committed againſt The All-ſufficient and All-perfect Creator. *But what the Law could not do, in that it was weak, God* hath done by *ſending His own Son in the Likeneſs of ſinful Fleſh, and* by making Him an Offering *for Sin*; that is, He hath thereby *condemned Sin*, by ſhewing His Reſentment of it; and The Bleſſed *Jeſus* did thereby *put away* the Guilt of *Sin from us, by the Sacrifice of Himſelf.*

And together with the Guilt, the Puniſhment likewiſe of their Tranſgreſſions is removed far from the Faithful and Penitent. Thoſe future Terrors and Torments which

which the Holy Scriptures threaten and denounce against Impiety and Disobedience, *the Worm that never shall die*, and *the Fire that never shall be quenched*, are no longer the proper Lot and Portion of *Sinners* which *are in Christ Jesus*; unless they will obstinately and impenitently return from a Life of Faith, to their former Iniquities; from having been washed and purified in the Blood of *Christ*, to their *wallowing in the Mire*. If we keep the Terms of the Covenant, past Transgressions are done away, all Things are become new: The Law of eternal Death is abolished in us, and we are made free from it: And as, then, we are by the Sufferings of *Christ* become the Heirs of Life, and Children of Light; *let us walk as Children of the Light, and make no Provision for the Flesh, to fulfil the Lusts thereof*.—Farther, we shall find still more Cause to *glory in the Cross of Christ*, if we consider Him, not only as Our Redeemer, but likewise

2. As Our *Conqueror*. He has not only redeemed us from the Guilt, and Punishment of Sin, but has likewise promised His Spirit to destroy the Power and Dominion of it: Has not only overcome and removed from

from us *a ſecond Death*, but has alſo conquered and vanquiſhed the Terrors of *the firſt*. The ill Conſequences of the Sin and Fall of Man are not more evident from the external Sufferings which have followed it, than from that inward Corruption and Depravity which every thinking Man perceives in his own Mind. All the Powers of the Soul are manifeſtly weakened; and all her Faculties depraved. The Underſtanding is darkened and miſguided by Sin; the Will made obſtinate and perverſe; the Paſſions violent and ungovernable. We find within ourſelves a Delight in that which is evil, and an Averſion to that which is good: Theſe charm away our Reaſon, and rob us of our Strength; and when they have thus captivated the Mind, become ſuch abſolute Maſters of us, as to make us in love with our Chains, and fond of our Captivity. And therefore, ſays the Prophet, naturally ſpeaking, *the Ethiopian may* as ſoon *change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots*, as *they may do Good, who are accuſtomed to do Evil.* And yet we may ſay with the Apoſtle, *in all theſe Things, we are more than Conquerors, through Him that loved*

loved us. His Grace is ſufficient to warm, animate, and invigorate the Soul; to rouze her from her Lethargy, and awaken all her ſleeping Powers; to dart in new Light upon her, and remove all her Darkneſs; and to give her other and ſufficient Strength to ſhake off the heavy Yoke of her Luſts, and the Tyranny of her Paſſions. The *Principalities and Powers* we contend with are too weak to reſiſt it; *the God of this World* is forced to give way, and *flee* before it; the ſtrongeſt Charms of Temptation, and the warmeſt Propenſities of Nature, are conquered by it; and we are hereby brought out from the Slavery and Dominion of Sin, *into the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God.*

And as the Powers of Darkneſs are thus vanquiſhed by *the Grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*; ſo are the Terrors of the Grave overcome by His Croſs. That great Debt of Nature, which God in Juſtice and in *Mercy* requires we ſhould all pay, is not without great Reaſon called in the Book of *Job*, *the King of Terrors.* Becauſe all human Comforts muſt then forſake us, all our Enjoyments become uſeleſs, if not mortifying to us, and all our Tranſgreſſions and Iniquities riſe up in Judg-

ment against us. The Soul must then naturally have strong Forebodings of her future State; and must shrink back and tremble at the Apprehensions of what is shortly to befal her; when the Awe and Solemnities of God's Tribunal set themselves in Array against her. And she can then have no Recourse to the World, because it is ready to vanish away: But even then she has still a sure Refuge in *the Cross of Christ*, whereby all her Fears may be allayed, and all her Terrors conquered. It was *Job's* Consolation, that he *knew that* his *Redeemer lived, and that He should stand at the latter Day upon the Earth.* And when the Shadows of Death shall, in our Turns, overtake us; when the Riches, in which we trusted, shall have forsaken us; and the Power, in which we gloried, shall be no longer able to protect us; when all, our Friends shall be able to do for us, will be to give us helpless Cries and useless Tears, and the Day of The Lord approaches very near unto us; the good Christians may even then glory in St. *Paul's* Triumph, and say, *O Death, where is thy Sting? O Grave, where is thy Victory? The Sting of Death is* indeed *Sin, and the Strength of Sin is the Law*; but that

Law was abolished, and that Sin blotted out, by the Cross: *And* therefore *Thanks be to God, Who giveth us the Victory* over these, and every other Enemy, *through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

3. Another View, in which we have Reason to glory in *Christ*, is, as He is our *Instructor.* He is *the Way and the Truth*, as well as *the Life*: And as the Perfection of the Soul does consist in Purity and Knowledge, every greater Degree of these is a farther Step to that Perfection, and is accordingly to be valued and esteemed by us. As our intellectual Faculties are what chiefly distinguish us from the Beasts that perish, and as the Usefulness of our Knowledge is what ought chiefly to endear it; our Joy in The Crucified *Jesus* will be found yet more rational, and more just, if we consider Him as the Improver of the Faculties of our Minds, and as That *Light, Which came down from Heaven, and Which coming into the World, enlightneth every Man.* How imperfect and corrupt were Men's Notions of God and of their own Nature, before the Revelation of the Gospel! and how just are the Apprehensions of Him, and of ourselves, which are given us by it! The Speculations of Christianity

ſtianity are pure as well as practical: They improve our Ideas of the Divine Immenſity, Goodneſs, and Mercy; and by diſcovering to us our Origin and our Corruption, they give us the moſt juſt, that is, the moſt lowly, Opinion of ourſelves. They diſcover Enemies and Dangers to us, which otherwiſe we ſhould not have certainly known, and enable us as certainly to guard againſt them. They open Scenes of Joy and Delight, which they alone can aſcertain to us, and excite us to indulge the Expectation, and reap the Comforts, of them. And they diſplay the Wonders of God's infinite Love to us in the cleareſt and ſtrongeſt Points of Light, by revealing the whole Oeconomy of our Salvation, and thereby ſhewing us the *wonderful* Mercy, as well as Juſtice, of our offended God, in *all* His Dealings with the rebellious and ſinful Sons of Men. *And let not* therefore *the wiſe Man glory in his Wiſdom, neither let the mighty Man glory in his Might, nor let the rich Man glory in his Riches: But let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he underſtandeth and knoweth* God, *that* He is *The Lord, Who exerciſeth loving Kindneſs, Judgment, and Righteouſneſs in the Earth.*

4. A

4. A Fourth just Foundation for our glorying in *Christ* is, that He is Our *Lord*. As Such, He has a just Claim to our Honour and Affections, and we are in some measure made Partakers of those Honours, with which He is honoured. He is the Head of that Body, of which we all are Members; the Corner-stone of that Building, of which we all are Parts: And as therefore we, on the one hand, from thence owe Him many Duties; so, on the other, is His Exaltation in some measure ours, and the Head cannot but diffuse its Glories, as well as its Influences, to all the Parts of the Body. For the same Parallel, which St. *Paul* himself draws between the natural and mystical Members, may likewise be drawn between those Members and their Head; *if one suffers, all the rest suffer with it; if one be honoured, all the rest* have reason *to rejoice with it*. Besides, it is our Glory and our Interest to be governed by Him; to have His Strength ready to support, His Arm to defend us (against all our spiritual Enemies) as Parts of His Body; to be under the Protection of His Authority, and the Guidance of His Spirit; to be directed in all our Ways by

His moſt pure and perfect Laws, and to be amended and corrected by the wholſome Severities of His Diſcipline; in a Word, to reap the preſent Benefits of His Love, and be entitled to the future Rewards of His Bounty; and to have our Duty and our Happineſs ſo interwoven and united, that nothing is required of us as a Part of the one, which does not naturally and neceſſarily tend to advance the other. *And let him therefore that glorieth, glory in The Lord.*

5. Fifthly. And as He is our Governor, ſo is He likewiſe our *Interceſſor*. The Conſideration of the immenſe Diſtance between the Creature and The Creator, together with the Awe and Reverence which that Diſtance inſpired, has naturally made wretched and ſinful Men afraid to approach the Throne of God by themſelves, and has therefore cauſed them to apply to other Creatures, whom they thought better and greater than themſelves, to interpoſe between them and Infinite Majeſty, and to make Interceſſions for them. And to this Principle, ignorantly applied, the Idolatry of the Heathens, and the Superſtitions of too many Chriſtians, greatly owe their Riſe and Increaſe; hence it

it is, that there have been, in all Ages, *Gods many, and Lords many. But with us there is but One God The Father, by Whom are all Things; and One Mediator between God and Man, the Man Christ Jesus:* by Whom our Approaches to the Throne of Grace are made easy and successful; the Thunderings and Terrors of God's mighty Voice are veiled from us; and we are permitted to speak freely to God, and live. Through *Him we have Access* with Boldness *unto The Father*; by Him the Prayers of the Saints are made more powerful and efficacious, and are offered up to God, *as Odours of sweet Smell, as Sacrifices acceptable and well pleasing unto Him.* And all our Applications therefore to any of our Fellow-Creatures, are both derogatory of the Honour of our Great Intercessor, and vain as well as wicked. We cannot be sure, that the Saints and Angels can hear us when we pray; and, if we could, what Need can we be in of any other Intercessions, since *it is Christ, Who* even *sitteth at the Right Hand of God, and Who is able also to save them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth, and*

makes Intercession for us. And as then we depend on His Merits, so ought we likewise to rely on His Mediation, for the Success of our Petitions: Great are the Blessings that attend, great the Honours that are done us, by His Interpositions; *and in Him* therefore *we do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.*

6. Sixthly. Another View, in which we ought to *glory in Christ* crucified, is that of His being Our *Comforter.* When the Loss of their Master, and the Sufferings they were likely to endure, made His Disciples disconsolate at the Thoughts of His Departure; His Advice was, not *to let their Heart be troubled, nor to let it be afraid,* because, says He, *I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you.* And what He here promised, and afterwards vouchsafed, in an extraordinary and miraculous Manner, to supply the extraordinary Wants of the first Preachers of the Faith, may be justly applied, in the ordinary Course of His Providence, to all the Distresses of His afflicted Servants, in all Ages of the Church. *He will not leave us comfortless, He will come to us.* He will hear the Cries of the Fatherless, and have Regard to the Widow's Complaints,

Complaints. He will hear the Groans of the Prisoner, and behold the Labours of the Captive, and will either break off their Chains, or make them sit easy upon them. He will deliver, or support us, in all our Difficulties, and in all our Distresses comfort us. When outward Afflictions croud in upon us, and all human Helps are weak or wanting, even then the Mind is open to inward Consolations, and the Soul that trusts in Him, shall never be forsaken. When Wants depress, or Fears alarm, or Terrors surround us; from Him may be granted Strength and Resolution to the weak, Steddiness to the doubtful, and Fortitude to the disconsolate: Or, at worst, the faithful Christian has this comfortable Assurance, which nothing but the Faith in a Crucified Saviour can give him, that his Sufferings, how great soever, will be of no long Duration, and his short Weight of Heaviness and Sorrow be succeeded by an eternal Day of Joy and Consolation. Which leads me to consider our Blessed Lord in yet another View; and that is,

7. As Our *Judge*. If ever human Nature had Reason to boast of itself, it was upon

upon its Union with The Divine; and if any thing can make the Dread of the great Tribunal ſupportable, it muſt be the Conſideration of Him, Who will ſit upon it: the Thought, that at our Arraignment and Trial The Same Perſon, who ſhall come with the Solemnity and Authority of a Judge, ſhall come as The Son of Man, Who once ſuffered as a Criminal for our Sakes; and that therefore the Terrors of that Day will be leſſened by the View of our Friend and Benefactor; when in the midſt of an innumerable Multitude of Men and Angels, we ſhall behold Thoſe Hands and Feet, and look into That Side, which bled for our Tranſgreſſions. What can be the Conſequence of ſuch a Proſpect, in the midſt of ſo much Fear and Trembling, but the Surprize and Joy of crying out in St. *Thomas's* Tranſport, Our *Lord, and* our *God?* The Powers of ſinful Men are too weak to behold the Glories of an Immenſe Deity; His Brightneſs would be too ſtrong for human Eyes to bear, and His Majeſty would reduce us to our primitive nothing. And it is therefore in great Merey, that *The Father has committed all Judgment unto The Son:* In Whom we not

not only glory, as partaking of our Nature, and having a Fellow-feeling of our Infirmities, which must somewhat soften the severe and rigorous Sentence of the Judge; but likewise as being ourselves yet more nearly related and united to Him, as His Disciples and Friends, and thereby the Heirs of the Promises, and Joint-heirs with Him, of the *Kingdom of* His *Father*, *and* our *Father*, His *God*, *and* our *God*. Which brings me to consider Him,

8. In the last Place, as Our *Hope*. The Sentences of Judgment will be immediately succeeded by perpetual Misery and Torment on the one hand, and by eternal and ineffable Glory and Happiness on the other. And our Hope is, that thro' Faith in the Sufferings, and by sincere Conformity to the Laws of *Christ crucified*, we shall obtain a Title to this eternal Inheritance: That our Sins shall be done away thro' His Blood, and our imperfect Obedience be accepted through His Merits; and that therefore *He is* only *gone before to prepare Mansions* in Heaven *for us*, *that where* He is, *there* we *may be also*. As He is our Redeemer from Sin and Death, so He will be Himself *our exceeding*

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Great Reward. The Participation of His Glory, and the Enjoyment of Himself, are the immense Recompence He offers to us for our stedfast Adherence to the Faith, and for the Labours and Sufferings of a few Days and Years. The Soul will then be disencumbered of all her Clogs and Infirmities, and enter upon a State of Happiness; the Glories of God will surround, the Communications of The Almighty enliven her; the Cherubin and Seraphin will attend her, the glorious Company of the Apostles, the goodly Fellowship of the Prophets, and the noble Army of Martyrs will accompany her; and they shall join with her in eternal Hallelujahs to the Great King of Heaven and Earth; in a City *where there shall be no Temple, for The Lord God Almighty and The Lamb shall be the Temple of it; and where there shall be no Need of the Sun, neither of the Moon to shine in it, for the Glory of God shall lighten it, and The Lamb shall be the Light thereof*; and thus shall she *reign with Christ in the Kingdom of His Glory, for ever and ever.*

And *do not our Hearts burn within us,* when we hear Him opening these Things

to

to us, in the Scriptures? Is not the Mind raiſed, and the Affections warmed, at the diſtant Proſpect of them? Does not the bare Recital of them, make us (for the preſent at leaſt) willing to forſake all to purchaſe them, and deſirous of *fleeing away, and being at reſt?* How great then muſt be the Tranſport, how inexpreſſible the Happineſs of poſſeſſing them? How vaſt muſt be our Debt of Gratitude to Him That purchaſed them? And in whom ſhould the Chriſtian glory, in whom ſhould he place his Eſteem and Love, his Boaſting, and his Joy, but in *Chriſt Crucified*, in Whom alone he can have a Claim to them?

Thus have I conſidered The Bleſſed *Jeſus* in all the ſeveral Views of His being, Our *Redeemer*, Our *Conqueror*, Our *Inſtructor*, Our *Lord*, Our *Interceſſor*, Our *Comforter*, Our *Judge*, and Our *Hope*. And from the Whole, I preſume, we cannot but abundantly ſee the Truth and Reaſon of the Voices of the many Angels and Thouſands, whom St. *John* heard[a], ſaying, *Worthy is The Lamb That was ſlain, to receive Power,*

[a] Rev. v. 11.

and

and Riches, and Wisdom, and Strength, and Honour, and Glory, and Blessing.

And let us, therefore, approach His Altars with the deepest Sense of His Benefactions to us. Let us commemorate His Sufferings with Thankfulness and Love: And renew and confirm our Resolutions of obeying His Commandments. Let us meditate on all that He has done, and suffered, and purchased for us, till they make strong and lasting Impressions upon our Minds; till His Sufferings grieve, and His Rewards draw us to Him; and till our Hearts are thereby filled with Joy and Gladness, and our Mouths with Praise and Thanksgiving. *And let every Creature which is in Heaven, and on the Earth; and under the Earth, and such as are in the Sea, and all that are in them, say, Blessing and Honour, and Glory, and Power, be unto Him That sitteth upon the Throne, and unto The Lamb, for ever, and ever.*

THE

The Senses in which

CHRISTIANS

Are restrained by their RELIGION

With Respect to the

W O R L D.

The Senses in which Christians are restrained by their Religion, with respect to the World.

SERMON X.

GAL. vi. 14.

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the World is crucified unto me, and I unto the World.

IT having been already shewn, in treating of these Words, that neither the World nor any of its Enjoyments deserve so much of our Care and Concern, as to be made the Subjects of our glorying; and many Reasons having been already urged from Our Blessed Lord's Sufferings, His Immense Benefactions, and His manifold Relations to us, to prove, that *the Cross of Christ*,

or *Christ crucified*, is alone the true and proper Object of a Christian's Glory; I proceed now to the Consideration of those other Reasons for this Truth, which arise from ourselves; and which flow from the Obligations we lye under to Him, from the Engagements we have entered into with Him, and from the Commands and Restraints which our most holy Religion lays upon us. And this leads me therefore in the

IV. Fourth and last place, to explain those Reasons, why *Christ crucified*, should be the only Object of our Glory, which are implied in the last Words of the Text, namely, because, *by* Him *the World is crucified unto* us, *and* we *unto the World*. That is, because, by professing to embrace Him and His most Holy Religion, we profess to have so perfect a Confidence in Him, and to be so entirely under His Guidance; to have such a Mastery over our Desires and Affections; to sit so loose as to all outward Enjoyments; and to be under such a constant Disposition of Mind to resign and surrender them upon His first Summons; that we may very properly and justly be said

to

to be *dead* to every thing but Himself: We profess to have our Appetites so mortified, our Passions so restrained, as to present Delights and Pursuits, and our Affections and Desires so strongly fixed, and so highly enflamed with the Hopes and Expectations of enjoying Him and His Glory hereafter; as to be able to say with the Psalmist, that as we have none *in Heaven but* Him, so we *desire nothing upon Earth in Comparison of* Him; and consequently that our Faith in Him, and Obedience to Him, have so powerful and lively an Effect upon us, as that *He* may truly be said, in the Words of the Apostle, to *crucify the World to us*, and *us to the World.*

Now the Restraints, which our most Holy Religion lays upon us, with respect to the World, are these.

1. To be dead to its Vices and Corruptions.

2. To enjoy its innocent Delights and Pleasures with Moderation and Temperance, and to keep our Affections free, and disengaged from them. And

3. To be in a constant Readiness and Disposition of Mind to resign and surren-

der them; whenever the Cause of Christianity shall require it of us, or our God and Saviour shall call us to Himself.

This is, I conceive, the true Import and Meaning of Christian Mortification and Self-denial; in this Sense, we are at all Times, and in all Places *to take up our Cross*, and follow The Blessed *Jesus*, and *not to love Father or Mother, Sister or Brother, more than Him*, lest we should be found to be *unworthy of Him*: In this consists, in a great measure, the true Perfection of the Christian Life; the highest Command over ourselves attainable by us on this Side the Grave, or required of us: It consists not in Sourness and Morosenes, not in Ill-nature and Censoriousness, not in Cruelty or Barbarity; but in Purity of Mind and Body, in Temperance and Sobriety, and in a ready Resignation of ourselves and our Possessions to the Will and Disposal of our Lord and Master; from Whose Love *neither Height, nor Depth, nor Things present*, whether joyous or grievous, *nor Things to come*, whether feared or expected here, ought to separate and remove us.

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1. The first Instance, in which The Blessed *Jesus* has *crucified the World to us*, is this; that He requires we should be *dead* to its Vices and Corruptions. The Life of the true Christian, is a Life of Purity. He is obliged *to forsake Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godlily, in this present World.* Upon his Profession of the Gospel, *old Things are passed away* from him, and all *Things are become new*; and he is to *put off, as concerning the former Conversation, the old Man*, and is to *be renewed in the* inward *Spirit of his Mind, in Righteousness, and true Holiness.* He is now to act upon different Motives, by different Rules, and to different Ends, from what he did, while he continued in Sin; and is therefore to work out a thorough Change in his Life and Conversation; to *act worthy of that holy Vocation wherewith he is called*; and to have an Eye, in all his Words and Actions, to the great End of his Conversation, the Salvation of his Soul. With this View, the Temptations of Sin are to be resisted by him, the Allurements of Vice overcome; the Countenance and Authority of corrupt and wicked Men is to

have no Weight with him, but Iniquities, however authorized by Custom, are to be discountenanced by him, and the most publick Vices avoided; the pleasing Motions of Revenge are to be conquered, and the Desire of Evil suppressed: He is neither to offer Injuries, nor revenge them; is neither to be allured, terrified, nor awed into Sin; but is to be at a professed Enmity with the Corruptions of the World, however countenanced or recommended, as they can be to him; and is therefore, by a constant and regular Course of Piety, Justice, and Charity, to be ever labouring after *a Conscience void of Offence towards God, and towards Man.* In this he is to be still watchful and diligent; to be in constant Jealousy of the World, and Fear of himself; to be ever mindful, that the Laws of Truth and Love are to be the Measures of his Actions, and neither the corrupt Maxims, nor wicked Customs of Men; and how short soever he may fall of Christian Perfection, yet he is ever with Zeal and Courage to labour to attain it.

That we should indeed arrive at an unerring State here, is (whatever spiritual Pride may

may ſuggeſt to us) neither within our Power, nor our Duty; and therefore Proviſion is made, in the Goſpel of Peace, for the Cure of our Vices and Failings. And as it is ſuppoſed, that even a good Man may frequently fall; ſo is it directed, that he ſhould as often riſe again, by an unfeigned Sorrow and Repentance. And to this Purpoſe it is required of us, that we ſhould frequently humble ourſelves in the Sight of God, and lament and bewail that Guilt and Iniquity, whereby His Wrath and Indignation are juſtly incenſed againſt us; that the Pleaſures of Sin ſhould be ſucceeded by the Remorſe and Anguiſh of true Contrition; and that we ſhould confeſs and forſake it, if we will obtain Mercy.

And whenever, therefore, the Croud and Confuſions of publick Buſineſs diſtract us; whenever either the conquering our Paſſions, or ſubduing our Luſts, the Promotion of Virtue, and the raiſing us to more lively and effectual Sentiments of God and Religion, require it of us; it is then incumbent upon us, to withdraw a while from the World, and retire into our own Breaſts; and Faſting and Mortifications then become ne-

cessary Duties. To suppose, that Pain and Torment, Whippings and Scourgings, are acceptable to God, as such; is to suppose, that He cruelly delights in the Misery of His Creatures, and loves to afflict, causelessly, the Children of Men: And to place a Merit in Cruelties and Austerities, to believe that we can either make an Atonement for Sins by them, or are more lovely in the Sight of God, merely because more wretched in ourselves; is to derogate from the Efficacy or the meritorious Sufferings of Our Lord, and to deny the Goodness and Mercy of God. But nevertheless, as He is a God of Purity, He must delight in Virtue; He requires Piety and Holiness from us; and as he who enjoins any End, must necessarily enjoin likewise the Use of those Means which lead to it; we must therefore consequently look on Abstinence and Self-denial as the Duties of our Profession, so far and as often, as we find them necessary and conducive towards the Promotion of true Piety and Religion. In their Tendency to these Ends, consists all their Virtue and Worth; and our Want of them for these Purposes, and the just Commands of Authority, are to

to be the Measures of them. Retirement and Recollection naturally tend to corroborate and strengthen the Mind; to collect and unite the scattered Forces of our Reason, and shew us the Wiles and Deceits of our spiritual Adversaries in their true Light; to confirm our Resolutions, and recal our wandering Thoughts from the busy Entanglements and vain Pursuits of Life, and to compose and fix them on their proper Objects, by beginning and maintaining here *a Conversation in Heaven.* And when an Abstinence from the otherwise innocent and useful Pleasures of Life, and the denying ourselves the Gratification of our Appetites and Desires, is found necessary for the Promotion of these pious Purposes; what might otherwise be innocent, becomes then unlawful; and we are in all Things to *crucify the World to* us, *and* ourselves *to the World,* so far as to free ourselves from the Corruptions, and conquer the Vices of it. And as we are to be thus dead to the Iniquities of the World, so are we

2. Secondly, to enjoy its innocent Delights and Pleasures with Moderation and Temper, and to keep our Affections free and disengaged

gaged from too great a Fondneſs for them. The pious Chriſtian may enjoy the good Things of Life with Chearfulneſs and Delight, but he is not to take up his Reſt in them. He is to have in View a more pure, more ſubſtantial, more durable, and more perfect Happineſs, than any the World can give him, as the main End of his Glory; and is therefore to look beyond the imperfect and tranſient Delights of the one, to the Stability, Eternity, and Perfection of the other. And with this View, he is to be, in the Midſt of Grandeur, humble; in the Midſt of Power, juſt and equal; in the Midſt of Plenty, compaſſionate and charitable; and in the Midſt of Pleaſure, temperate and reſerved. To deny himſelf the Enjoyment of the Bleſſings God gives him, were to make Chriſtianity rob him both of his Reaſon and Religion, by obliging him to act both irrationally and ungratefully. It were to deprive him of the Power of diſtinguiſhing between Good and Evil, Pain and Pleaſure, and to cauſe him to make no Difference between the Bleſſings and Comforts of a proſperous State, and the Frowns and Afflictions of an adverſe one. It were to make thoſe

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Desires of Comfort, which are implanted in him, useless and unprofitable; and to make that Complacency, he must necessarily receive in the Presence of delightful Objects, criminal and offensive; which is to charge The Author of Nature Himself with Vanity and Folly. And Christianity therefore does not rob us of our Enjoyments, but sets the proper Bounds and Limits to them. Joy and Delight, even in outward Objects, are naturally productive of Gratitude and Love to the Giver of them; and as Chearfulness of Mind does most naturally dispose us to go on with Steadiness and Vigour in our Christian Calling, it is not barely innocent, but a Duty. If we guard against the Brutalities of Sensuality and Excess; if our Pleasure be founded upon right Principles, and terminate at last in its Proper Object; if our Enjoyment of the World does not chain down our Affections to it, and make us fondly in love with it; such an Enjoyment of the Fruits of our Labour, and of the Vouchsafements of Providence, is, in the Words of the wise Man, *the Gift of God.* It will enable us to encounter our spiritual Adversaries with the greater Resolution

lution and Courage; it will give us the firmer Confidence and Hope in Him, Who gives them to us as a Pledge of His Favour; it will prompt us to act upon the noblest Principles of Gratitude and Love, in Return for it; and it will lead us from present Joy to future Glory, and teach us to raise our Thoughts and Desires from Instability to Perfection, from Earth to Heaven. This Chearfulness of Mind, so directed and employed, is of all others that Disposition of Soul, which is most wanted in the Christian Life, and is most productive of Christian Graces: And as a moderate and well regulated Enjoyment of ourselves is most apt to produce that Disposition; it has therefore the Dictates of Reason to vouch for it, and the Commands of Religion to confirm it. In this Sense, *a merry Heart doth Good, like a Medicine*; whilst on the contrary, *a broken* and dejected *Spirit drieth up the Bones*. But when our Pleasure degenerates into Sensuality, our Joy into Wantonness and Excess; when it corrupts the Mind, and debases the Understanding; when it causes us to forget God, and creates in us an Aversion to our Duty; and when it captivates

vates our Wills and Affections, makes us take up wholly with present Gratifications, and unwilling to look beyond them for the Completion of our Bliss, it then exceeds the Limits The Blessed *Jesus* has set to it; and we are in this Sense commanded by his Apostle, *not to love the World, neither the Things of the World*, because *whosoever does thus love the World, the Love of The Father is not in Him.* The

3. Third Instance given of the Restraints laid upon us by our Religion, with respect to the World and its Enjoyments, is this; that we ought to be in a constant Readiness and Disposition of Mind to resign and surrender them, whenever the Cause of Christianity shall require it of us, or Our God and Saviour shall call us to Himself. This was the Case of the primitive Christians, who were called to Sufferings and Death. Thus the rich Man in the Gospel is commanded by Our Lord Himself, *to sell all that he had, and give to the Poor, if he would have Treasure in Heaven*; because it was then necessary to the persecuted and afflicted State of his rising Church. And tho', by the Blessing of God, we are now surrounded

rounded with outward Peace and Prosperity, and are not at present, through the Divine Goodness, called to so severe a Trial; yet, should it please His Justice to execute Vengeance upon us, and raise up over us the Enemies of our Religion to persecute and torment us; as Persecution and Suffering would then be our Portion, so Constancy, and Patience, and a ready Resignation would be our Duty; it would then be necessary to obey God rather than Man; and to follow The Crucified *Jesus*, by forsaking all, if we would be His Disciples. And though, blessed be God! we have no Reason to fear the Approach of so terrible an Encounter; yet, we know, there is another, which sooner or later must be undergone by all, in their last Moments. And what in the former Case must have been resigned to the Power and Authority of Men, must in the latter be chearfully given up to the Call and Commands of God. It is the great Business of Christianity to be ever preparing us to meet Him, and to be happy with Him; and among the many Dispositions necessary for our doing this with Comfort, one is, that we sit so loose

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to the Honours, Pleasures, and Profits about us, as to be able to part with them with Readiness, upon the first Summons; that by a continual Remembrance of our great Change, by frequent Meditations on the ineffable Glories of another Life, and by serious Reflections on the Vanity and Emptiness of this, we so fortify our Minds against the Loss of it, so *crucify the World to* ourselves, *and* ourselves *to the World*; as that, when the fatal Hour shall approach us, and the Shadows of Death overtake us, we may be willing *to be dissolved, and to be with Christ.*

Thus have I considered the several Particulars I at first proposed to speak to, in treating of the Words of the Text. And the Substance of the Whole is this: That we have great *Reason* to follow our Apostle's Example in the Text, and not *to glory* in any thing but *The Cross of Christ*; because neither the World, nor any of its Enjoyments, can deserve any great Degrees of our Affection and Love; can so much as give us a just Cause for Pride and Vanity; and much less therefore can reward our Labours and Pursuits if entirely fixed upon them; and because

cause The Crucified *Jesus* is the noblest and most deserving Object of our Love, as to all His different Relations to us considered; as Our Redeemer, Our Conqueror, Our Instructer, Our Intercessor, Our Lord, Our Comforter, Our Judge, and Our Hope. And that it is our *Duty* thus to glory in Him, because our Profession of Him and His Religion obliges us to be dead to the Vices and Corruptions of the World, and either to avoid and shun them, or to purify ourselves from the Pollution of them by a sincere Repentance; obliges us to keep our Affections free; and in order thereto to be temperate and regular in the Use of its Accommodations; and requires us, to be ready and willing to quit the Possessions of them, whenever called upon to do so by The Providence of Him Who gave them.

And I shall now conclude with only two Inferences from the Whole, which are,

1. That we may from hence learn to admire the Depth of the Riches of the Goodness of Our God and Saviour. And

2. Secondly, That we be hereby led to frequent that Institution, which He has appointed as a solemn Remembrance of what He suffered for us. First,

First, we may from hence learn to admire the Depth of the Riches of the Goodness of God to us. *What could have been done more for my Vineyard*, says God of the *Jewish* Church, *that I have not done in it?* and, what more could have been suffered, or purchased for His Body, may we say of the Christian, which The Blessed *Jesus* has not undergone and obtained for it? If to lessen our present Pain, and to remove from us future Punishment; if to conquer the Evils of Life, and the Terrors of Death for us; if to lead us out of Darkness and Ignorance into Light, and point out the Paths of Peace to us; if to teach us *Wisdom and Instruction, to give Subtlety to the Simple, and to the young Men Knowledge and Discretion*; if to assist us in all our Difficulties; and in all Dangers to comfort and support us; if to give us Strength and Grace here, and to prepare for us Mansions of endless Bliss hereafter; if to raise us from Corruption to Purity, from Weakness to Perfection, from Death to Eternity; if this be to relieve the Wants, supply the Necessities, and perfect the Happiness of his Servants; what is there which we have not seen, that The Blessed

ſed *Jeſus* has done for us? *And God forbid*, therefore, *that we ſhould glory, ſave in the Croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* In Him alone *we do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.* His Benefactions are reſolvable only into Infinite Mercy and Goodneſs, and therefore deſerve the greateſt Degrees of our Admiration and Eſteem. An attentive Conſideration of them muſt raiſe and inflame the Mind; and ſurprize it into Acts of Joy, Gratitude, and Love: muſt convince Men of their vaſt Debt and Obligations to Him, and make them afraid of offending Him: muſt ſhew us more and more, that *the Ways* of His Mercy *are to us unſearchable*, and *His Thoughts* of Goodneſs to us *paſt finding out*; and that therefore the Apoſtle's reaſoning is very concluſive, that *if God ſo loved us, we ought alſo to love one another*, and are moſt ſtrongly obliged ſo to *love Him* as to *keep His Commandments.* And as Reflections on the Divine Goodneſs would thus influence us in our whole Conduct, and lead us to Virtue and Piety in general; ſo would they particularly incite us, as I propoſed to obſerve, in the

2. Second and laſt Place, to frequent that Inſtitution, which Our Lord Himſelf has ap-

appointed, to be a Memorial of His Humiliation and Sufferings for us. To this his Gratitude will naturally lead the good Man, as well as his Duty oblige Him. For what can be ſo agreeable to him, as to remember the meritorious Sufferings of his Saviour? what can he ſo much wiſh for and deſire, as to be united with Him? and what ſo proper a Means to promote and perfect that Union, as a ready Obedience to His laſt Command, and a ſpiritual and devout Participation of His Body and Blood, thereby *to ſhew forth His Death till He come?* This Inſtitution is a Sort of Pledge and Aſſurance to us of the Certainty of His coming again; and what, then, can be ſo devout an Entertainment to the pious Chriſtian, as to take Occaſion from thence to look back with Grief on thoſe Pains and Tortures, which He endured for the Sins of Men, and to look forward with Amazement to thoſe inexpreſſible Enjoyments, which He will infallibly beſtow on all them *who love His Appearance?* The Celebration of this Sacrament does naturally tend to ſtrengthen our Faith, and confirm our Hope; to fortify our Reſolutions, and

rectify our Conduct; and to give us ardent and enflamed Desires of meeting Him in Heaven, with whose Servants we join, in the strictest and most solemn Act of Communion on Earth. And whoever, therefore, is so sensible of his Offences, as to be sincerely desirous of having them removed; whoever has so just a Sense of the Infinite Mercies of God, as to think they demand a Return of Duty and Obedience to Him; must be very desirous of coming frequently to the Holy Table, as the most effectual Means of subduing Sin and performing an acceptable Service; must be very unwilling to lose any Opportunity of testifying, in the Face of His Church, his glorying in the Cross of *Christ*, by so devout and pious a Remembrance of it; must hear with great Delight those comfortable Words, with which Our Blessed Saviour invites all Penitents to Himself; and will embrace, with Thankfulness of Heart, every Invitation to this heavenly Feast, as a necessary Proof of his Compunction and Grief of Mind for his Transgressions; and of his sincerely *rejoicing in The Lord, and joying in The God of his Salvation.*

And

And let theſe then be the Diſpoſitions of Mind, with which we ſtill approach the Altar of God. Let the Lowlineſs and Humility of our Hearts be great, and our Repentance ſincere. Let us raiſe and exalt our *Souls to magnify The Lord*; and our *Spirits to rejoice* exceedingly *in God our Saviour*. And God grant, *that we may ſo eat the Fleſh of Chriſt, and drink His Blood, as that we may evermore dwell in Him, and He in us.*

THE

WEAKNESS

OF SOME

PRETENCES

Which tempt Men

To continue in SIN;

AND THE

Neceſſity of Repentance.

The Weakneſs of ſome Pretences which tempt Men to continue in Sin; and the Neceſſity of Repentance.

SERMON XI.

ROM. xiii. 12.

The Night is far ſpent, the Day is at hand: Let us therefore caſt off the Works of Darkneſs, and let us put on the Armour of Light.

THE State of the Heathen World, before the Goſpel was revealed, is very juſtly repreſented in Scripture, as a State of *Darkneſs*; a State of Uncertainty, Danger, and Dread; wherein Men were very doubtful and uncertain about the Way to true Happineſs; were ever in great Danger of miſtaking it, or deviating from it; and had great Reaſon to be in perpetual Fears and Anxieties

Sin; ſince we have now a clearer and nearer Proſpect of that Salvation which is prepared for us, than we either had, or could have, at or before our embracing of the Goſpel. *The Night* of Ignorance, Error, and Corruption, which overſpread the World, is already *far ſpent*; and with reſpect to ourſelves, *the Day* of Knowledge and of Comfort *is at hand*: *let us therefore caſt off* thoſe Vices and Impurities, which are very properly called *the Works of Darkneſs*, becauſe they are founded in Ignorance or Perverſeneſs, and ſhun the Light; and *let us put on*, or perform thoſe Works of Faith, Holineſs, and Virtue, which are very elegantly ſtyled, *the Armour of Light*.—That is, which are as ſtrong *Armour* to the good Man, *on the right Hand, and on the left*; which are his ſureſt Defence againſt, and Support under, temporal or ſpiritual Evils or Enemies; and which are founded in the cleareſt Knowledge, are conducted by it, and will lead to endleſs Happineſs in another Life. So that theſe Words are a preſſing Exhortation to the *Romans* to forſake their Sins, and immediately reform their Lives, from this Conſideration, that their Knowledge of the Goſpel would

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aggravate their Guilt, and increaſe their Puniſhment, if they were not influenced by it *to walk in Newneſs of Life.*—Which is what Our Bleſſed Lord Himſelf had before declared, when He ſaid, that the Condemnation of the World, at and after His coming, would be this, that *Light was come into the World, and Men loved Darkneſs rather than Light, becauſe their Deeds were evil.*

In ſpeaking to thoſe Words of the Apoſtle, I ſhall

I. Enquire whence it is, that notwithſtanding theſe preſſing Exhortations in Scripture, Men are ſtill backward in putting *off the Works of Darkneſs*; and endeavour to ſhew the Weakneſs of ſome of thoſe Pretences, which ſupport them in it. And

II. Shew the abſolute Neceſſity of Repentance and Reformation, both from the Nature of that Happineſs which is reſerved for good Men; and from the Nature of thoſe Promiſes on which their Hopes are built.

I. Firſt,

I. First, I am to enquire whence it is, that notwithstanding these pressing Exhortations in Scripture, Men are still backward in putting off the Works of Darkness; and to endeavour to shew the Weakness of some of those Pretences, whereby they encourage themselves in it. And here it may be observed of them in general, that as great as the Degeneracy of Mankind is, Reason and Conscience will still in some Measure maintain their Dominion, and oblige Men to acknowledge and submit to their Authority. So strong are their Reproofs, and so powerful their Admonitions, as often to stop very abandoned Men in their vicious Courses, and force them, in order to their own Quiet, to catch at the Shadow of Truth at least, though they lose the Substance of it. And hence it is, that they are so industrious to be wicked upon Principle; and to find some Pretences, how false or groundless soever, which may guard them against the Reproaches of their own Minds, and at the same time leave them at Liberty to indulge themselves in their Pleasures, and to prosecute their Lusts. This makes them

ſo ready to catch at any Abſurdity to ſkreen themſelves from the unwelcome Work of ſearching into, and forſaking their Vices; and lay great Streſs upon what does leaſt deſerve it, the very idle, and indeed wicked Pretences which countenance and encourage them to go on, for ſome time at leaſt, in their Iniquities. Such are

1. The wicked Notions too frequently entertained of the Extent of The Divine Goodneſs.—When the merciful Suggeſtions of The Divine Spirit incite them to awake from the Lethargy of Sin, and the impartial Dictates of their own Minds terrify them with the Horror of Guilt, and Dread of Puniſhment; it is too frequent for Men to lull themſelves aſleep again in this fatal Security, by unjuſt Reflections on the Divine Mercy; till they are from thence brought to conclude, that this Goodneſs is too great to puniſh what their Partiality and Self-love call *little Offences*, with ſo much Severity as He has threatened; or at leaſt, that it will for the future be as extenſive as it has been hitherto, and not execute Vengeance ſpeedily, if at all. From whence, they as eaſily, as unjuſtly infer, that it is yet time enough to ſet about

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ſo ungrateful a Work as the Search into our own Deformities; and that the next Day, or Week, or Month, or Year, will be ſoon enough to begin and complete it.—So that rather than diſcompoſe their own Reſt and Tranquillity, rather than begin the unwelcome Work of looking into their own Boſoms, they will magnify the Divine Mercy, in Oppoſition to the Divine Juſtice; and conclude, that The Almighty, becauſe full of Mercy and loving Kindneſs, will therefore be in Effect both unfaithful and unjuſt. Reflections, which are no leſs deluſive to themſelves than injurious to The Divine Majeſty; and which muſt, unleſs themſelves repented of, terminate in as ſevere a Puniſhment as abuſed Goodneſs can merit. Pretences, which at once ſhew the infatuating Nature of Sin, and the deſperate Condition of the Sinner; when to avoid the preſent Uneaſineſs of reviewing his Ways, and putting off his Works of Darkneſs, he can dare even to reproach Heaven with his Iniquities, and in Effect charge them upon Purity itſelf, becauſe he is ſuffered to live in them. —For thus to argue from preſent to future Impunity; to ſay with the Wretch in the

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Tenth *Psalm*, that because God at present *hideth away His Face*, therefore *He will never see it*; carries with it not only an ungrateful Abuse of Infinite Goodness, but is likewise the ascribing our Crimes, in some Measure, to That Power, Which might indeed prevent, but does continue to permit them. And how provoking then to The Majesty of Heaven, must this Contempt of His Mercy be? How severe, in the End, must be that Vengeance, to which Men bid such Defiance? Happy indeed it is for such Men, that the Goodness they have to deal with is Infinite, and does yet allow them Time to repent and escape: But inexpressibly miserable will be their future Condition, when, unless they apply themselves to this Repentance, they will, to their eternal Confusion, find, that His Justice and Faithfulness are Infinite too. The Observation of the wise Man is indeed as true as old, that *because Sentence against an evil Work is not executed speedily, therefore the Hearts of the Sons of Men are fully set in them to do evil*: But then the Declaration of *Isaiah* [a], concerning the End of these Men, is no less

[a] Chap. lxv. 20. iii. 11.

awakening than prophetical, that *though they live to be an hundred Years old, yet shall they in the End be accursed, and the Rewards of their Hands be given them.* Though our compassionate Judge is slow to Anger, yet His Judgments are sure and inevitable; the great Day of Retribution of the Just and Unjust, however mercifully delayed, will yet infallibly appear; and the Neglect of preparing for its Appearance is the most sure Method, both to make us fear its coming, and to add to the Severity of its Punishments. And blessed therefore be His Holy Name, for that He *has not forgotten to be gracious, nor shut up His loving Kindness in Displeasure*; but has added to His other Blessings, that of every Day's Life, that we should return, and be converted, and that He should heal us. An Opportunity, which both our Prudence and Interest should oblige us to improve with equal Gratitude and Application; since *as the Tree falls, so it lies*, and to the impenitent, nothing succeeds *but Terror, and a dreadful looking for of Judgment.*

2. Secondly, another Obstruction, that causes many to neglect the putting *off the Works of Darkness*, is the pretended Labour and

and Difficulty of the Work. To ſubdue imperious and indulged Paſſions, to conquer and eradicate inveterate Habits, and to undergo the ſevere Diſcipline of Mortification and Self-denial, are Duties which weak Minds too often magnify into Impoſſibilities; and this makes them, as is juſtly obſerved of them, *work out* their Deſtruction, as they are commanded to do their *Salvation*, even *with Fear and Trembling*. Their good Intentions are rendered ineffectual by theſe imaginary Fears; whilſt they are aſhamed of Sin, and ſincerely deſirous of forſaking it; but think they have already gone too far to be able to retreat.—An Undertaking indeed it is laborious and difficult, and therefore neceſſary to be ſpeedily and heartily proſecuted, becauſe it is ſo: But if rightly conſidered, it has nothing ſo terrible in it, as the Tempter or our Weakneſs may ſuggeſt, nor any thing impoſſible, which may reaſonably deter us from it. Conſtancy of Mind, and Aſſiduity of Application, daily ſurmount Difficulties, which were in Appearance inſuperable; nor can we be able to judge of the Force of ſuch Reſolution, till Experience does convince us of it. The

Dangers, that at a Diſtance terrify and aſtoniſh, upon our nearer Approach often vaniſh into Air; and the Labours, that unattempted amaze and intimidate, upon being undertaken with Courage, prove ſurprizingly vincible and eaſy to us. And therefore to continue in the *Works of Darkneſs*, for fear of not being able to conquer the Difficulties of forſaking them, can only be Cowardice, and a Willingneſs to be deceived; and that Cowardice and Willingneſs will heighten our Guilt, and increaſe the Aggravations of it.

Nor is it the Force of Reſolution only, that renders ſuch Fears unmanly; but what makes our Submiſſion to them in this Caſe inexcuſable, is, the certain Participation of that Divine Grace, which is promiſed to us. Our Bleſſed Lord tells us, *that the Things that are impoſſible with Men, are poſſible with God*; and therefore, though the Work of Reformation were allowed to be beyond our natural Powers, yet were it unpardonable in us to neglect it, becauſe we are ſure of being aſſiſted by an Omnipotent Hand, Which will render our Diligence ſufficient, tho' our Virtue here ſhould not be complete. The

Promiſe

Promise is, that God will *give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him*; that if we *seek Him* diligently, *He will be found*, if *we call upon Him*, *He will hear*. And this should surely inspire us with a Fortitude becoming the Soldiers and Servants of *Christ*; should quicken those, who are not far gone in Vice, to return with Speed, before they are brought under the Dominion of it; should also encourage those, who are grown old in Iniquity, not to despair of breaking off their Sins by Repentance; and should animate all to apply themselves with unwearied Application to the Throne of Grace, for that Assistance, of which all stand in need.

But besides this Assistance, which in ordinary Cases puts it in our Power to turn to God, because it is itself within our Reach; there is yet another Consideration, which would render our Fears and Remissness in turning from our Iniquities unpardonable, even tho' that Assistance had not been promised—And this is, that it is not required of us, that we should here become perfect; but only that we should labour incessantly after Perfection. Our Endeavours, tho' weak, if unfeigned and unwearied, will be accepted,

through the Mediation and Sufferings of Our Redeemer, as the fulfilling our Duty; and neither will *the bruised Reed be broken, nor the smoking Flax be quenched.*

So that upon the Whole it may appear, that these Pretences are frivolous and trifling; that these chimerical Impossibilities are only the Creatures of our own Imaginations; and that, supposing them in Fact real, yet our Remissness is not excusable, because the Conquering them is no more than God has promised His Grace to enable us to do.

3. The last Cause of neglecting this great Duty of Repentance, that I shall mention, is, the placing the Substance, or the Whole of Religion, in Things in which it does not consist.—This was the Crime of those Pharisaical Hypocrites, whom the Baptist calls *A Generation of Vipers*, because they sought *the Baptism of Repentance*, but neglected to perform *the Works meet for it*. These were those *whited Sepulchres*, who placed the Whole of Religion in the Breadth of their Phylacteries, and the Length of their seeming Devotions; without indeed beautiful, but within full of all Uncleanness; and who laid the greatest Claims to Religion and

and Virtue, though they were the leaſt actuated by them. A Practice very juſtly condemned in a neighbouring Church, which teaches the Members of her Communion, with numbered Prayers, forced Penitences, and liberal Oblations, to compound, as it were, with God for their Iniquities; and as juſtly chargeable upon thoſe among ourſelves, who ſhall lay ſo much Streſs on one Branch of religious Duty, as to think it will authorize the Neglect of any other Part of it; who ſhall either be ſo fond of Stiffneſs and Formality, as to make Religion chiefly to conſiſt in Affectation and Moroſeneſs; or ſhall, by a very ſtrict Obſervance of the ceremonial Parts of the Law, think themſelves at Liberty to ſuperſede the weightier Matters of it. The fatal Conſequence of this Error is, that it is the Parent of both Superſtition and Profaneneſs; as it inclines Men to be, on the one hand, ſuperſtitiouſly exact in theſe miſtaken Shews of Virtue, wherein it doth not conſiſt; and to be profanely negligent, on the other, of thoſe indiſpenſable Duties, wherein it does. This makes Men neglect the Examination and Amendment of their Lives, as a Work as

unneceſſary as it is ungrateful; and miſerably delude themſelves with expecting, by the exact Performance of theſe particular Parts of Religion (whether they be really or only in Imagination ſuch) to make up for the Non-obſervance of all the reſt.—A Pretence, which, how abſurd and how dangerous ſoever, will never fail of being readily entertained by the vicious Part of Mankind; whoſe Aim it is, ſo to blend Religion and Impiety together, as to be able to promiſe themſelves the Rewards of the one, and yet be at Liberty to enjoy the Pleaſures of the other.

But the Deceit is obvious, and the Practice fatal.—True Religion is conſtant and uniform; not confined to particular Duties, which are beſt ſuited to our Diſpoſitions, and coſt us leaſt Pains; but extended univerſally to all the Laws of God. It is a regular Progreſs in Virtues of every kind; a continual Warfare with Vices of every Denomination. And accordingly, the Promiſe is not to the devout Man, if he be impure or uncharitable; or to the Liberal and Bountiful, if he be an Unbeliever, or Blaſphemer, or revengeful; but to him only, whoſe conſtant

Care

Care it is, *to obey* all *the Commandments of his Father Which is in Heaven.* And therefore, ſays the Apoſtle, *he that offends in* but *one Point*, that is, lives in the Love and conſtant Practice of any known Sin, *is guilty of all.*—And if then we would prefer our real Happineſs to tranſitory Pleaſures, we muſt remember, that no Virtues, how glorious or valuable ſoever in themſelves, can compenſate for the wilful Commiſſion of any one *Work of Darkneſs*; and that unleſs we repent of thoſe, as well as perform theſe, we ſhall inevitably periſh. Which will more fully appear, if we proceed to ſhew,

II. Secondly, the abſolute Neceſſity of ſuch a Repentance, and Change of Life, both from the Nature of that Happineſs, which is reſerved for good Men; and from the Nature of thoſe Promiſes, on which their Hopes and Claim are built: Or in other Words, becauſe this Change is neceſſary to that Perfection of our Nature, which is requiſite to our Happineſs; and becauſe without it, the Promiſes of the Goſpel will be to us of no Effect, and with regard to our-

ourſelves, the Death of The Son of God at beſt vain and unprofitable.

Were Sin of ſo pure and uncorrupt a Nature, as to leave no Stain of Guilt behind it, its Effects would be the leſs dreadful, becauſe tranſient; but certain it is, that it leaves ſuch Marks of Impurity upon the Mind, as nothing but Repentance can wipe off; and ſuch as would embitter the Joys of Heaven, if the Sinner could be conveyed thither with his Vices about him. For long and continued Habits have not only a mighty Effect upon the Body, in rendering thoſe Offices eaſy and practicable, which at firſt were hard and difficult to be performed; but the greateſt Misfortune of them, when applied to improper Objects, is, that they ſtrongly affect the Soul itſelf; they lay a great Biaſs upon the Underſtanding and all its Faculties, till by gradual and repeated Acts, they incline it to a Love and Fondneſs for thoſe Vices, which at firſt were looked on with Abhorrence. When Men ſet out in a vicious Courſe, they have often many and great Obſtructions in their Way, which do much imbitter the Pleaſures, and enhance the Labour and Slavery, of Sin.—

The

The gracious Suggeſtions of God's Holy Spirit muſt be reſiſted; the warm Repreſentations and pungent Remorſes of their own Minds muſt be ſtifled and ſuppreſſed; and as our Lord ſays of St. *Peter* on another Occaſion, they muſt ſubmit to be bound by another, and *to be carried*, as it were, *where they would not*.—But a long Courſe of Iniquity will get over theſe Rubs, and make Men fancy, at leaſt, that the Way is ſmooth and eaſy. If it cannot raiſe up Sin to a Level with the Mind, it will at leaſt bring down the Soul to a Level with Sin; corrupt her Appetites, and debaſe her Affections; till ſhe is at laſt ſo totally immerſed in preſent Delights, as to be ſcarce able to form an Idea of any Happineſs beyond ſenſual Gratifications.—And *what Fellowſhip* then can there be *between Light and Darkneſs? what Communion between Chriſt and Belial?* When the Mind is thus dead and loſt to all immaterial Joys, what Comfort could ſhe receive, even in *Abraham's Boſom?* What Reliſh can that Mind have of the tranſcendent Bliſs of a near View and Contemplation of God's Nature and Works, which can form no Notion of the Loveli-

neſs of either? Or what Pleaſure can Eternity itſelf give him, who muſt be eternally abſent from what he moſt loves, and eternally preſent with what he thinks the moſt inſipid, if not the moſt hated Objects? Whoever, then, would love and enjoy God hereafter, muſt early form his Mind to a Taſte of thoſe heavenly Pleaſures, by habitual Piety and Obedience here. Whoever would find it his Happineſs *to ſee Him as He is*, muſt begin his Intercourſe and Converſation with Him on this Side the Grave; and the firſt Step to that Converſation muſt neceſſarily be, *to turn away from the Wickedneſs that he hath committed, and do that which is lawful and right.*—The Want of which, as it proves thus a natural Incapacity for Happineſs, ſo likewiſe is it a religious one too; ſince the Nature of the Goſpel Promiſes, on which the Hopes of this Happineſs are built, is ſuch, that, without this Repentance, they will be to us of none Effect, and the Death of The Son of God to us vain and unprofitable.

Theſe Promiſes, though extenſive, are yet limited; and though much beyond the Merit and Expectation of Mankind, and offered freely to all, yet will be conditional

ditional in their Application. They are neither designed for, nor belong to, the Impenitent; and they only shall partake of them, who by a firm Faith, a Renovation of Mind, and a Newness of Life, *seek for* this *Honour, Glory, and Immortality.* To reject and contemn our Lord's Precepts, is to deny Him in the worst of Senses, and to incur the Curse of being denied by Him, *before* His *Father Which is in Heaven.* Who then can look back, with Unconcern, on the Days of his Wickedness? Who can view the Streams that flowed from his Saviour's Side to cleanse him from his Iniquities, and yet continue impenitent, and disobedient to Him? His Sufferings for Sin must raise a Detestation for it, in all who would reap the Benefits of those Sufferings; and must excite them to steady and effectual Resolutions to disentangle themselves, as soon as possible, from its usurped Dominion, and pay no longer Obedience to it. The Sense of their Danger must so awaken, and the Hopes of Happiness must so powerfully animate them, as to set them, without Delay, about this necessary and important Work, while there is yet Time left,

left, and it is called To day, *because the Night draweth on, wherein no Man can work.*—And as this is always necessary, and never to be neglected, so is it more especially seasonable at this Time [a], which has, from the earliest Ages, been set apart by the Church of *Christ* for Piety and Recollection; for retiring, as much as may be, from the World, and making our Peace with God: And this, by looking into the State and Condition of our Souls, by lamenting our Sins, imploring Pardon for them, and entering into such a Course of Mortification and Self-denial, as is necessary to enable us to forsake them.—And may That God, *to Whom our Hearts are open, our Desires known, and from Whom no Secrets are hid,* so *cleanse our Hearts* from all Works of Darkness, and so incline them to keep His Laws for the future, that *by the Inspiration of His Holy Spirit* we may henceforward *perfectly love Him, and worthily magnify His Holy Name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

[a] Preached in *Lent.*

OF

OF READING THE SCRIPTURES WITH Underſtanding and Edification.

Of Reading the Scriptures with Understanding and Edification.

SERMON XII.

MAT. xxiv. 15.

Whoso readeth, let him understand.

THE holy Evangelist gives us, in this Chapter, that most remarkable Prediction of Our Lord, concerning the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the whole *Jewish* State, which was fulfilled about thirty Years after His Death; and by the fulfilling of which, His Fore-knowledge was wonderfully displayed, and the Truth of His Gospel mightily confirmed. In the Verse, out of which the Text is taken, He applies the Prophecy of *Daniel*, which we have in his ix^th^ Chapter, to this great Event; and upon mention of the Prophet's Writings on this Occasion, He is led both to re-

prove the Careleſſneſs of thoſe, who read that holy Penman without a due Regard and Attention to his Meaning; and to exhort all who heard him, to peruſe and conſider the Prophecy with that Care and Reverence, which the Authority of the Writer, and the Importance of the Subject required from all, who would eſcape the common Deſtruction. For the Words of the Text may be underſtood in either, or in both Senſes.—*Whoſo readeth*, let him not do it with ſuch Indifference and Unconcern, as if he cared not whether he underſtood what he read or not; but let him do it with that Application and Serioufneſs, that Reverence for the Writer, as the Prophet of The Moſt High God, and thoſe Diſpoſitions of Mind and Heart, which are neceſſary to prepare Men for the Reception of divine Truths; if they would ſo read, as to underſtand them. And whoever conſiders the Sublimity of the Doctrines contained in it, will find great Reaſon to apply Our Bleſſed Lord's Advice in the Text, to the whole Book of God: Whoever conſiders, that it is from thence alone that he can *with Certainty* form juſt Notions of God and himſelf, and be rightly in-

ſtructed in the Ways of Salvation, will be very willing *to be always put in Remembrance of theſe Things, though he knows them, and be eſtabliſhed in the preſent Truth.* I ſhall therefore take occaſion from the Words of the Text to enquire,

I. What Diſpoſitions of Mind and Heart are neceſſary for thoſe, who would read the Word of God with Underſtanding and Edification. And

II. How far it is either our Duty, or in our Power, to underſtand them.

I. Firſt, I am to enquire what Diſpoſitions of Mind and Heart are neceſſary for thoſe, who would read the Word of God with Underſtanding and Edification. And the chief of theſe are—Humility, a Thirſt after the Knowledge of Divine Truths, an earneſt Deſire of eternal Happineſs, and an honeſt and upright Heart.

Humility of Mind is abſolutely neceſſary for thoſe, who would ſtudy the divine Writers with Profit and Comfort; both to keep them out of the Seat, and to guard them from

the Reproaches, of the Scorner; and to qualify them to receive and embrace those scriptural Doctrines of Forbearance, Self-denial, and Charity, which are so contrary to the natural Appetites and Inclinations of Men, and so mortifying and intolerable to the proud in Spirit.—The proud Man is very apt to make his own Understanding, the Measure and Standard of all Truth; and will therefore be very ready, at first Sight, to reject those Doctrines as false and absurd, which he cannot comprehend. He is very fond of his own Opinions and Sentiments, and will not have Patience and Temper enough to give any others a fair and impartial Examination, which thwart and contradict them.—A principal Doctrine of Christianity, the Merits of the Death of *Christ*, is a Stumbling-block in his Way, which he can hardly get over: A crucified Saviour, he thinks a Contradiction in Terms; and cannot easily be brought to attend to the Instructions of plain and illiterate Men, though actuated by The Spirit of God.—He is fond, as of his Opinions, so of his Person: To teach him, that he is in Nature upon a Level with the lowest of Man-

Mankind, and ought to treat them with Regard, as the Workmanship of The Same God; with Humanity, as by Nature his Equals; and with Tenderness and Affection, as his Fellow-Candidates for eternal Glory; this is *an hard Saying*, he cannot bear it: And little Advantage therefore can he be expected to reap from the Word of God itself, since it requires him first to empty himself, and cast off all his imagined Sufficiency, in order to come to God; and tells him, that The Spirit of The Most High dwells only with him, that is of *an humble and contrite Spirit*, and who is *meek and lowly in Heart*. —And one Reason, why God takes up his Abode with such, is this; that the humble Man is diffident and suspicious of his own Abilities.—He is conscious of his own Follies and Imperfections, and is therefore open to Instruction from any Hand, and ever willing to embrace it. He is very sensible, that he knows little, and practises less; and will therefore readily resign himself up to the Guidance of the holy Penmen, both in Matters of Principle and Duty. It is enough to satisfy him of the Truth of any Doctrine, that inspired Writers teach it, whether he

comprehends it or not; and there is no Precept so hard, but he can resolve to obey it, when convinced that his Maker requires it at his Hands. What gives Offence and Distaste to the proud, is to him matter of Joy and Comfort: The Plainness and Simplicity of the Gospel, is with him a good Argument that it comes from God, and that is a fresh Instance of his Goodness. He expects not, that The Almighty should reason with his Creatures in the Manner that would be most suitable to the Vanity of Men; but thinks it most agreeable to His Majesty and Authority, to teach and to pronounce; And he has great Reason to hope, that The Holy Spirit will *open his Understanding, that he may understand the Scriptures* when he reads them; because he reads them with the Reverence, that is due to them as the Word of God, and with a fixed Resolution to *cast down Imaginations, and every thing that exalteth itself against the Knowledge of God; and to bring into Captivity every Thought to the Obedience of Christ.*

Another Qualification necessary for those, that would *so read* the Scriptures *as to understand*

derstand them, is this, that they must have a sincere Thirst after the Knowledge of *divine* Things. Without this, they will neither read them with that Application and Diligence which is necessary to come at the Meaning of them; nor will the divine Truths, they teach, make that Impression on their Minds which is necessary for their Edification and Comfort. *Ho, everyone that* THIRSTETH, saith the Prophet, *come ye, and drink; come, buy without Money, and without Price.*— He that *thirsteth not*, will neither seek the Waters of Life with that Diligence he ought, nor drink them with that Delight and Transport which they will give to every pious Mind, once enflamed with the Love of Divine Knowledge. The sacred Writings contain such Treasures of Wisdom as no Man can exhaust; and as they open to us the Wonders of God's Nature and Providence, which are beyond the Discovery of Man's Understanding, each Doctrine affords new Matter of Admiration and Love. —We have here the Foretastes of that Knowledge, which will employ and make us happy to all Eternity; and he, that has a just Taste and Relish for this, which alone,

deſerves the Name of true Knowledge, will find his preſent Satisfaction and Comfort increaſe, in Proportion as he makes a Progreſs in it. He is here in no Danger of being deceived, or vainly amuſed; the Doctrines taught are the Dictates of Unerring Truth; and the Study of them is as much ſuperiour to that of any other kind of Learning, as the Heaven excels the Earth.—And, indeed, as nothing does really deſerve the Name of Learning, but what does immediately or ultimately tend to make us wiſer and better Men; the ſacred Books muſt therefore be the beſt, becauſe the ſhorteſt, and the moſt effectual Way to true Wiſdom and Virtue; and the more we know of them, the more we ſhall deſire ſtill to know, and the more Comfort and Joy will they infuſe into our Souls, till what we now ſee darkly, ſhall be made clear to us, and till *we know* as fully *as we ourſelves are known.*

But both our Improvement and our Comfort in theſe Studies, depend greatly on this, that we conſider the *Bible*, as what it is, the Book of God; not as the Work of Man, but as the Revelations of our Maker;

ker; not as written for our Entertainment, but to be our infallible Rule in what we are all moſt concerned to know, the Way to future and eternal Happineſs. Whoever conſiders them in this Light, will daily grow more and more in love with them, till they come to be, as they were to the primitive Chriſtians, dearer to him than his Life; whilſt all other kinds of Knowledge, which do not center here, will, however magnified by vain or deſigning Men, prove lighter in the End than Vanity itſelf.—And if Men ſearch the ſacred Writings only to ſatisfy a vain Curioſity, or to entertain themſelves with Speculations, which will be of no real Profit to their Souls; the Diſappointment muſt be equal to the Folly of the Deſign. And it is therefore neceſſary for thoſe, who would ſo *read the* Scriptures, as *to underſtand them* to their Profit and Edification, to have a Thirſt after the Knowledge of *Divine* Truths, *as ſuch*; to conſider the mighty Weight and Importance of them; and to propoſe the ſame End in reading or hearing them, as God Himſelf had in inſpiring thoſe who wrote them, namely, the Salvation of their Souls. Which leads me

to

to the third Disposition beforementioned, which is

An earnest Desire of eternal Happiness. The Knowledge, the Comforts, and the Uses of the Scriptures, are all of a spiritual Nature. They are designed to teach and guide us to a spiritual Life here, in order to lead us to a spiritual Happiness hereafter: And whoever does not consider them in this Light, will never be able rightly to understand them. They are designed to raise us above present Profits and Delights, to Joys incomprehensible, and full of Glory. Their great Aim is to persuade us, to *set our Affections on Things above, not on Things on the Earth*; to *have our* daily *Conversation* with The Blessed *Jesus* and the Saints *in Heaven*; that so our present Life may truly be said *to be hid, with Christ, in God*. Our Most Gracious God, and Ever-Blessed Redeemer, sends His Prophets and Apostles to us, to bring us to Himself. With this View they wrote the holy Books, and died to testify the Truth of what they wrote; and with this View must they be studied and considered by those, who would discover the hidden Wisdom that is in them, or taste the hid-

hidden Comforts that flow from them.—This Design is one proper Key to the Interpretation of them; and it must therefore ever be remembered, that *the Words* which are there spoken, *are Spirit*, and *are Life*. The great Advantages they propose are *spiritual*; the *Life* they lead to, as only worthy of our constant Application, is not temporal but eternal; and they must therefore always be considered in this Light, or, in other Words, must be *spiritually* understood.—It is this holy Book alone, from which we can learn *with Certainty*, that we are intitled to a State of future and unspeakable Glory; it is this Book alone, that can shew us, *with Authority*, the Way that infallibly leads to it; and the good Christian, who would study the Scriptures aright, should ever have it in his View. Whenever he sees the *Bible*, he should think of Heaven; whenever he reads, or hears it read, he should have the Joys at God's Right Hand *strongly* imprinted on his Mind; and this will not only make him both love and reverence those invaluable Writings which guide him to those Joys; but will even help him to understand those Parts of them, which

which he is most nearly concerned to know. It will quicken his Diligence, and strengthen his Application; it will teach him to lay a proper Stress upon every Sentence, which is of such *mighty* Concern to him; and it will teach him to interpret those Doctrines, and Promises, and Rules of Life, which he is most strictly bound to know, in such a Manner, as shall best agree with the Purity of That God Who is to bestow his Happiness, and with that Holiness which is necessary in order to it.

Indeed the holy Scriptures in general contain such Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge, as no Man can exhaust; they contain a greater Fund of Learning, strictly so called, and require greater Abilities of Mind, and a greater Share of Knowledge to understand all the Parts of them, than any one Book (I might say, *all*, in some respects) that ever was published in the World. But Applications of this kind are peculiarly the Labour, the Duty, and the Happiness, of those, whom God has endued with Power or Learning to explain and to enforce them. With regard to the Generality of Christians, to whose Case I am now confined; their Busi-

Buſineſs is only to know ſo much of them as is neceſſary for their eternal Happineſs; and in order to this, they muſt not only earneſtly deſire that Happineſs, but muſt likewiſe have the fourth and laſt Qualification beforementioned,

An honeſt and upright Heart.—That is, they muſt read the holy Scriptures with an honeſt and ſincere Reſolution to do their utmoſt to practiſe all thoſe Duties, which they ſhall find there required of them, how difficult, or how diſagreeable ſoever. They muſt have no ſecret Luſts, or vicious Habits hanging about them, to give a wrong Caſt and Biaſs to their Minds; but muſt give themſelves wholly up to the Guidance and Direction of God's Word, without any Reſerve. For ſinful Habits cloud the Underſtanding, pervert the Will, and harden the Heart. And therefore ſays Our Bleſſed Lord, *he that will do His Will ſhall know of* My *Doctrine, whether it be of God.* He that will not obey His Laws, will not be unprejudiced and impartial enough to judge aright, even of the Proofs of His Divine Miſſion. For vicious Habits and repeated Guilt do, in the Language of the Apoſtle, as it were *ſear Men's Conſciences* and

and Underſtandings *with an hot Iron*, againſt any Divine Impreſſions; they make them deaf to the Calls of God Himſelf; ſo that *they will not ſee with their Eyes, nor hear with their Ears, nor underſtand with their Hearts, leſt they ſhould be converted and healed.*— And ſince then one gracious Deſign of the holy Scriptures is to oppoſe and reform all Wickedneſs in Men; and ſince they, who reſolve to go on in Iniquity, will naturally be againſt the Scriptures, becauſe the Scriptures are againſt them; it is therefore abſolutely neceſſary, that they, who would underſtand that holy Book, ſo as to learn their Duty from it, ſhould at leaſt ſo far lay aſide their Love of Vice, as to come diſpoſed and reſolved to forſake it, as ſoon as it appears to be ſuch; it is abſolutely neceſſary, that they ſhould hear and read the Word of God with a ſincere Deſire to know the Truth, and with an upright Intention to embrace it; not in order to confirm themſelves in their own pre-conceived Opinions and fond Conceits, but with an honeſt Openneſs and Sincerity of Mind and Heart, reſolving to receive and put in Practice whatever they ſhall find to be their Duty. The Mind thus

thus diſpoſed, cannot but receive great Light and Advantage from the Scriptures. And if to this Uprightneſs of Heart be added the Humility, the Thirſt after divine Knowledge, and the Heavenly-mindedneſs beforementioned; the Man thus prepared, will ſee *the wonderful Things of God's Law.* He will find, that *the Law of The Lord* is quick and powerful, *converting the Soul*; he will find, that *the Teſtimonies of The Lord are ſure, and give Wiſdom to the ſimple*; and he will find that the Statutes of The Lord are ſo full of Comfort as to *rejoice the Heart*; and therefore his Delight will be *in the Law* of his God, and he will *meditate therein Day and Night.* Which leads me to the

II. Second Enquiry, how far it is either in our *Power*, or our *Duty* to underſtand this ſacred Book. And with regard to *Power*, it is in every Man's Power to underſtand the great Doctrines of Chriſtianity, and the eſſential Rules of Life, who is able to underſtand any other Book. And if Men are incapable of this kind of Inſtruction, it is their indiſpenſable Duty to make uſe of the other Means of Know-

Knowledge which God has put in their Power, by attending to and consulting those whom His Providence has *set over them in The Lord.* The great Principles, Rules, and Motives of true Religion, The Being and Attributes of God, His Method of governing the World, His Design in creating Mankind, His gracious Interposal to redeem them from Sin, the Happiness which is prepared for them in another World, and the Piety and Purity which He requires of them in this; these Things are so plainly revealed in the holy Scriptures, as to lie within the Reach of the meanest Understanding. That *God, The Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, created Man in His own Image*; that *by one Man*, or the first Man, *Sin came into the World, and Death by Sin*, and that *all Men are become subject unto Death, in that all have sinned*; that Our Blessed Saviour, *Who was declared to be The Son of God with Power*, and Who is *the express Image of His Person*, came into the World, and died for us, and by His Death hath *taken away the Sins of the World*; that The Holy Ghost, Who gave many miraculous Gifts to the Apostles does assist and *seal us* over *to the Day of our Redemption*;

demption; that there is another Life after this, of eternal Duration, wherein they, that have *done Good* here, *shall go into everlasting Life*, and *they, that have done Evil, into everlasting Fire*; that *God has appointed a Day, wherein He will judge the World by* our Lord *Jesus Christ*, Who will then appear *with Majesty and great Glory*; and that our great Business in this Life, the *one thing needful* for us here, is to prepare for this Judgment, by *living soberly, righteously, and godlily, in this present World*;—these Things, I say, are declared to us in God's Word, in such *plain* and *express* Terms, that it requires some Subtlety, and more Pains, to be able to misinterpret and misunderstand them. And these are the essential Points, which every Man is most concerned to know, and do; these are the Principles and Precepts, upon the Belief, Confession, and the Practice of which every Man's Salvation does depend.—And inexcusable therefore is every Man amongst us, who does not *know these Things*; or does not believe and *do them*, if he knows them. Inexcusable is his Ingratitude to Divine Providence, Which blesses us with these Fountains of

unerring Truth: Inexcusable the profane Neglect and Contempt thrown on the Oracles of God, which contain *the Words of eternal Life*.

For no Man can doubt, but it must be his *Duty* to understand the holy Scriptures, as far as it is in his *Power*; if he considers either The *Author*, the *Nature*, or the *Design* of those Books. The Author is God, our Great Creator and Preserver, Who commanded and inspired the holy Penmen who wrote them: The Books are *in themselves* a Revelation of His Will and Pleasure, and contain Messages of the utmost Importance, which He sends to His Creatures: And the gracious *Design* of them, is to raise those, to whom He sends them, above the common Level of Mankind, to enlarge their Minds with the Knowledge of divine Truths, and to shew them the Way to that pure and perfect Bliss, for which they were created. And who, that considers this, can doubt, but it must be his great and indispensable Duty to do every thing that in him lies, to come at the understanding of these heavenly Things? Who can doubt of his being under the highest and strongest Obligations,

ligations, to be diligent and constant in perusing and studying this Book, which is his only sure and infallible Guide in the Ways of Righteousness, and the Paths of Peace?— Some of the great Men among the ancient Heathen saw, and lamented, their Want of this Knowledge, which is here vouchsafed to us; they found themselves perplexed and embarrassed in their Enquiries after The True God, and their Duty to Him, by their Ignorance of those Things, which a Revelation only could ascertain to them; and would probably have embraced with Eagerness any authentic Discoveries of the Divine Will, as the greatest Treasures they could have found.—Such of them as were really virtuous and good Men, such as *Socrates*, or *Plato*, would, in all Probability, have rejoiced in the glad Tidings of the Gospel; and would have thought all the Gratitude they could have shewn to God, too poor an Acknowledgment for so great a Blessing.— And what then must be our Fate, if we despise or neglect it? As it is our peculiar Advantage, that we may see those Things in Holy Writ, which *many great and righteous Men have desired to see, and have not seen*

them; *and to hear those Things which they earnestly desired to hear, and have not heard them*; so it will be our peculiar Guilt, and our Condemnation, if, having the holy Scriptures before us, we do not *search* and know them; or knowing, do not practise them; and it will, no doubt, be *more tolerable in the Day of Judgment* for *them*, than for *us*.

And God grant therefore, that we may *so read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by Patience and Comfort of His Holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast the Blessed Hope of everlasting Life, which He has given us in His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.*

THE

The Origin, Continuance, Ends, and Benefits

OF

CONFIRMATION.

The Origin, Continuance, Ends, and Benefits of Confirmation.

SERMON XIII.

HEB. vi. 2.

And of laying on of Hands.

ST. *Paul*, the Author of this Epiſtle, is here exhorting the Chriſtians, to whom he writes, not to be content with, or ſtop at, their preſent Attainments in the Knowledge or Practice of their Duty; but to labour earneſtly to make a greater Progreſs in all Chriſtian Graces; which he calls *going on to Perfection*. In order to this, his Advice is to *leave*, or look beyond, *the firſt Principles* of Chriſtianity, which in the preceding Chapter [a], he calls *Milk*, or Food fit only for ſuch as are *Babes in Chriſt*; and to advance to ſuch Degrees of Knowledge and Judgment in Chriſtian Truths, as, in

[a] ℣ 12, 13.

Purſuit of the ſame Metaphor, he calls *ſtrong Meat*, fit for ſuch as were come to a full Maturity of Underſtanding, and *able to diſcern both Good and Evil*[a]. Theſe firſt Principles, or *Foundations*, as the Apoſtle here enumerates them, are Repentance, Faith, Baptiſm, and *the laying on of Hands.* —*Leaving*, ſays he, *the Principles of the Doctrine of Chriſt, let us go on to Perfection*; *not laying again*, or not ſtopping always at, *the Foundation of Repentance and of Faith towards God, of the Doctrine of Baptiſms, and of laying on of Hands, and of the Reſurrection of the Dead, and of eternal Judgment.* Where, having firſt mentioned *Repentance* and *Faith*, which were Qualifications always required in order to *Baptiſm*, then *Baptiſm* itſelf, and then *the laying on of Hands*, he has been therefore underſtood, both by ancient and modern Expoſitors, to mean by the *laying of Hands*, the Rite of *Confirmation*; which almoſt ever followed the Adminiſtration of Baptiſm in the primitive Church.—And my Deſign, at preſent, being to ſhew the Wiſdom, and Uſe

[a] Chap. v. 12.

of

of retaining this ancient Cuſtom in our Church, I ſhall take occaſion from them,

I. To enquire into the Origin and Continuance of the Rite of Confirmation, in the ancient and modern Churches.

II. To ſhew ſome of the Ends, or Reaſons for which it is retained in our own. And,

III. To point out ſome of the Benefits which may be derived from it.

I. Firſt, as to the Origin and Continuance, of the Rite of *Confirmation*, in both the ancient and modern Churches; we know, that the ancient Fathers derived it from the Practice of the Apoſtles, and affirm that it deſcended from them to the Governors of the Church [a]; and the Moderns, among whom it is continued, do the ſame. It will therefore be proper to enquire into that Practice. —St. *Luke* tells us [b], that when *Philip* the Evangeliſt had planted a Church in *Samaria*, and the Apoſtles had *heard that Samaria had received the Word of God*, they ſent

[a] See Bingham, vol. i. pag 454. [b] Acts viii. 14.

thither

thither *Peter* and *John*, two of their own Body, who, when they came down, prayed for them, AND LAID THEIR HANDS ON THEM; and that then *they received The Holy Ghost*. In like manner, when St. *Paul* came to *Ephesus*, and *found certain Disciples there*[a], HE LAID HIS HANDS UPON THEM[b], after they had been baptized[c], and when he had LAID HIS HANDS ON THEM, *The Holy Ghost came on them, and they spake with Tongues, and prophesied*. From whence it is undeniable, that it was the Practice of the Apostles *to lay their Hands on* the Disciples after Baptism, and to pray for them; which is what the Bishops, their Successors in the Government of the Church, still do, in Confirmation.

Indeed we do not read, that the Apostles required their Successors to continue this Rite as of Divine Authority, and of Necessity to the Salvation of the Faithful. But neither does there appear the least Intimation, that it was intended to be laid aside. The subsequent Practice is a strong Presumption of the contrary. And the general Advantages of the Institution, which still continue, and will

[a] Acts xix. 6. [b] ✝ 6. [c] ✝ 5.

ever

ever continue, very much confirm the Supposition, that it was not designed to be temporary, and for that particular Season only.

And in the Text we see *the laying on of Hands*, mentioned among such Doctrines and Rites, as are evidently and undeniably fundamental, and of strict Necessity. And as *Calvin* himself thought the Text a plain Proof, that this Rite was apostolical, it is hard to suppose, that this only was to be discontinued or dropped; or, if this was the Case, why The Spirit of God thought proper to mention it among the others, or to make it a Part of that FOUNDATION of Christianity, which every one was supposed to hold fast and adhere to.—It is true, that we have in no Part of the *New Testament*, any express Command concerning Confirmation; as we have many concerning *Repentance*, *Faith*, *Baptism*, &c. And therefore, as it was not *given unto us*, nor *ordained by Christ Himself*, this alone shews, that it is strictly and properly, no Sacrament. And perhaps Cases may be supposed, viz. when the baptismal Vow is otherwise solemnly taken upon themselves, as by Men, who receive the Sacrament without having had

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an Opportunity of being confirmed; (in which Cases our Church seems to think a *Desire* to be so, sufficient) where the actual partaking of it may not be essentially necessary.—Yet as to all common and ordinary Cases, the Example of the Apostles appears to be a good Rule for our Practice in these Matters. It is generally accounted such for our Observance of The Lord's Day. And farther, as St. *Paul* in the Text is enumerating the first Principles of Christian Doctrine and Practice, and reckoning this among them; this seems almost equivalent to a Command, and much confirms our Obligations to imitate their Pattern.

It has been indeed pleaded, that the Practice of the Apostles and their Successors differed greatly, with regard to the Ends, for which they used this Rite: The Apostles doing it, to procure the extraordinary Gifts, and miraculous Powers, of The Holy Ghost, which accordingly followed, on their laying on of Hands: And their Successors using it only, as a just and good Means to procure the ordinary Graces of Wisdom and Truth, to enable young Christians:

ſtians to diſcharge the Duties of their Chriſtian Profeſſion.

But it can never be proved, nor indeed is it probable, that no other Powers, but the miraculous ones, attended the *laying on of the Hands* of the Apoſtles, nor that miraculous Powers always attended it. We may reaſonably ſuppoſe, that many of the *Samaritans*, mentioned before, had only the ordinary Comforts and Aſſiſtances of The Spirit conferred upon them at Confirmation. So that this Plea is not ſufficiently founded, to deſerve the Streſs which has been laid upon it.

However, it certainly was, and is, an Inſtance of great Wiſdom and Piety in the Governors of the Church to continue this Rite in Conformity to apoſtolical Practice: And it may be, and is, in ſuch a Senſe neceſſary to attend it; as it is the Duty of the Members of every Church, to obey the lawful Commands of thoſe, who are *ſet over* them *in The Lord.*

As to the Continuance of this Rite after the Apoſtles, it may be traced back from this Time to the earlieſt Ages of the Church. It was, indeed, accompanied with different

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Ceremonies [a], and performed at different Times, in different Churches, according as the Governors of those Churches directed. —But all that these Variations imply is, that as to the Circumstances of Time, Place, and some superadded Rites, it was the Sense of those Governors, that they might be continued, or altered, as Prudence or Judgment directed.

And as to the Moderns, the Church of *Rome* has, I think [b], laid aside the apostolical Practice of *laying on of Hands* in it, as well as added some superstitious Ceremonies in the Performance of it; and has farther declared it to be one of the Sacraments.—A Sacrament plainly of her own making, and not of our Blessed Lord's, Who has given us no one Direction or Command concerning it; and therefore justly rejected by us in this Light, as being one of the many Instances, wherein she wickedly teaches and enjoins the Commandments of Men, for the Doctrines of God.—But nevertheless, this Custom is continued in all other Protestant Churches, who have Bishops to continue it, as well as in our own; and some other Pro-

[a] Bingham, ibid. [b] See Ceremon. Religieus. tom. ii. p. 69.

testants

testants abroad, who have no Bishops, and therefore cannot *properly* have any Confirmation, are nevertheless so sensible of the Wisdom and Use of it, that they come as near it as possibly they can, in their Circumstances. They require all Persons, who have been baptized when young, to take their baptismal Vow upon themselves, when they come of Age, in a solemn Manner, in the Face of the Congregation, and almost in the Words of our Office of Confirmation; after which, their Ministers as solemnly admit them into the Number of adult Christians, give them Liberty to receive the holy Sacrament, offer up Prayers for them, and dismiss them with the Blessing[a].—Such is the Continuance of this solemn Rite of Confirmation abroad, in the Protestant, as well as the Popish Churches; and from this short Account of it, I now proceed,

II. Secondly, to shew particularly, some of the Ends or Reasons, for which it is still retained in our own.—The great and good Men, to whom, under God, we owe the Light of the Reformation among us, did not

[a] Osterwald's Grounds, &c. p. 174.

madly

madly make it their Rule in it, to run as far as possible from the Church of *Rome*; as well knowing, that, according to this wild Maxim, *Mahometanism* would be better than Christianity, and Heathenism than either.—But they truly and piously made it their Endeavour to follow the Directions of the holy Scriptures, as interpreted by the Writings and Practice of the primitive Church; and to throw off only those superstitious and corrupt Doctrines and Practices, which Popery had added to them, or grafted upon them.—Thus, in the Instance before us; they did not *reject* Confirmation, because it had been superstitiously abused, and impiously erected into a Sacrament; but they first reduced it to the primitive Practice of Episcopal *laying on of Hands*, *Benediction*, and *Prayer*; and then continued it in Conformity to the Practice of the Apostles, and for these excellent Ends:

1. That such Persons, as have been baptized in their Infancy, and are come to a sufficient Age to be able to act and judge for themselves, may in the Face of the Church, and before the proper Governors of

of it, the Bishops, publickly and solemnly take upon themselves their Christian Profession, and the Discharge of that Vow, which was made by others for them, when they could not make it for themselves.

2. That such Persons, and others, who have been baptized at Years of Discretion, may thus openly declare their Perseverance in their Christian Profession, and be solemnly dedicated to the Discharge of it by Imposition of Hands, *as preparatory to their receiving the blessed Sacrament.* And

3. Thirdly, that by the Prayers of the Bishop and of the Congregation, the ordinary Graces of The Holy Spirit may be obtained for them, to enable them to discharge these most important Engagements.

1. First, that such Persons, as have been baptized in their Infancy, and are come to a sufficient Age to be able to judge and act for themselves, may, in the Face of the Church, and before the proper Governors of it, the Bishops, publickly and solemnly take upon themselves their Christian Profession, and the Discharge of that Vow, which was made for them by others, when they could not make it for themselves.—

Wherever the Baptiſm of Infants prevails, it ſeems to make Confirmation (or ſome Solemnity of the like kind) not only expedient, but neceſſary; that thoſe Infants may not loſe the Benefits to which that Sacrament entitled them, by any Ignorance of, or Inattention to, the Conditions upon which they depend. If indeed the baptized Infants die in their Infancy, their Salvation is ſecured [a]: But if they grow up to a Maturity of Age and Judgment, there are, we know, Conditions to be performed by *them*, as well as Bleſſings to be received from God.—And as a wiſe Proviſion is made, that they ſhall be taught to know theſe Conditions, by taking ſolemn Engagements of their Sureties, that theſe will ſee them well inſtructed; ſo the ſame Wiſdom requires, that a Proviſion ſhould be made, as for the Diſcharge of theſe Sureties, ſo for bringing thoſe Inſtructions into proper Effect, by the perſonal Engagements of the Parties themſelves to put them in Practice. And if this be neceſſary at all, which no Chriſtian can deny; when can it be done

[a] Rubrick at the End of the Office for public Baptiſm of Children.

with

with so great a Probability of Advantage to the Persons themselves, as before Vices of any kind have stifled the good Seed sown in their Hearts? Or, to whom, or before whom, can it be done so properly, as to their spiritual Governors, *who watch for their Souls; as they that must give Account?* This may be ridiculed by the profane, or misrepresented by the ignorant or malicious; as the best Things are; but its Tendency to Godliness is not to be denied.—And it is therefore a Piece of Wisdom, which will *justify itself* to all serious Christians, who, without Prejudice, consider the Nature and Design of it; and who are desirous, that their Children may be so established *in the Nurture and Admonition of The Lord*, as is most likely to bring forth the blessed Fruits of good Works in their Lives and Conversations.—For what can be more expedient in order to this, than that they should, as the Office expresses it, *with their own Mouths and Consent, openly before the Church, ratify and confirm the Vows* made at their Baptism; and *also promise that, by the Grace of God, they will evermore endeavour themselves faithfully to observe*

ſuch Things, as by their own Confeſſion they have aſſented to, i. e. to believe, and to do, as becomes the Goſpel of *Chriſt*.

Again, another End or Reaſon, for which Confirmation is retained in our Church, is, that ſuch Perſons, as have been baptized in their Infancy, and others, who have been baptized at Years of Diſcretion, may thus openly declare their Perſeverance in their Chriſtian Profeſſion, and be ſolemnly dedicated to the Diſcharge of it by the Impoſition of Hands, as *preparatory to their receiving the bleſſed Sacrament*. In this Light Confirmation was always conſidered in the primitive Church [a]; and that it is for this End, among others, continued in our own, is evident from the Order at the End of the Confirmation-Office, that *none be admitted to the holy Communion, till ſuch Time as he be confirmed, or be ready and deſirous to be confirmed*.—The Participation of the bleſſed Sacrament being the higheſt Act of Chriſtian Worſhip, and the greateſt Privilege of the Chriſtian Covenant; it was ever juſtly thought neceſſary, that all Perſons ſhould give the ſtrongeſt and moſt public

[a] Bingham, ibid.

Proofs

Proofs of their being Christians *indeed*, before they were admitted to it.—It was justly thought necessary, that they should *confess with their Mouths The Lord Jesus Christ*, and declare their fixed Resolutions to perform their Part of the Covenant, into which they had entered with Him, when admitted into His Church: And Confirmation is still justly required, as being such a Confession and Declaration very publickly made, and accompanied with the solemn Dedication of the Confirmed to the Obedience of *Christ*, by one of the chief Governors of His Church.—And as to the Form of doing this by the Imposition of Hands; it is the approved and ancient Rite of dedicating Things and Persons to God. If considered only as adding Solemnity to the Office, it is highly proper and prudential: And it can never be deemed vain or superstitious by the Believer, who considers, that it is the Form prescribed by God Himself, in the like Cases, under the *Old Testament*; and that under the *New*, it was not only the Apostles Practice, as appears from what has been said, but that of our Lord Himself, Who, when young Children were

brought to Him, LAID HIS HANDS ON THEM, as well as *bleſſed them.* And

Laſtly; another End, for which Confirmation is retained in this Church, is, that, by the Prayers of the Biſhop and the Congregation, the ordinary Graces of The Holy Spirit may be obtained for thoſe Perſons ſo dedicated to God, to enable them to diſcharge theſe moſt important Engagements.—St. *Peter* expreſsly tells the *Jews* of his Time [a], the Promiſe of the Gift of The Holy Ghoſt was *not only to them and to their Children,* but *to as many as The Lord our God ſhall call* to the Chriſtian Faith; and, that Prayer is one inſtituted Means of obtaining that Gift, is very plain from *Chriſt,* Who in general ſaid, *Aſk, and it ſhall be given*; and Who has declared His Heavenly Father's Readineſs to give The Holy Spirit in particular *to them that aſk Him* [b].—And ſurely, if ever it be proper to implore His gracious Help for our Fellow Chriſtians; if ever His Divine Aſſiſtance be more than ordinarily wanted, or ought with uncommon Earneſtneſs to be ſought by us, and for them; it is, when they are entering

[a] Acts ii. 38, 39. [b] Luke xi. 13.

on

on that Time of Life, in which their own Passions from within, and numberless Temptations from without, will press them with most Violence to transgress God's Commandments; and when they take upon them such Engagements, as, we know, they are not able to perform, without His Assistance.—As to miraculous Powers, sometimes obtained, by the Apostles, by Prayer and the Imposition of Hands; it is allowed, as has been observed, that these are not now pretended to be obtained by Confirmation.—If it were so pretended, it would be very reasonable to call for the same visible Proofs which were given of those Miracles in the first Ages. But is it therefore improper for the present Governors of the Church, to ask for other Blessings, which also were most probably thus conveyed, with the same Solemnity?—Nay, supposing the Apostles obtained, by these Means, those extraordinary Gifts alone of The Holy Ghost, which were necessary for the Church of *Christ* in their Time; is it therefore vain or superstitious, to hope or believe, that by the Prayers of the Faithful, as well as of the Successors of the Apostles, those ordinary Graces may be ob-

tained, which will always be neceſſary for every Chriſtian, in every Age?—On the contrary, the general Promiſes of Scripture are juſt Grounds of Hope, that the Prayers of the Faithful will be heard; St. *James* aſſures us, that *the effectual Prayer of* one *righteous Man availeth much*; and it is therefore greatly for the Benefit of her Children, as well as a great Inſtance of her own Piety, that the Church has ordered her Governors to beg of God on this Occaſion, that He would *defend theſe* His *Servants with* His *Heavenly Grace, that they may continue* His *for ever, and daily increaſe in* His *Holy Spirit more and more, until they come to* His *everlaſting Kingdom*.—Theſe are ſome of the wiſe and good Ends, for which the Rite of Confirmation is continued among us; and that they may yet more plainly appear to be both wiſe and good, I now proceed,

III. Thirdly, to point out ſome of thoſe Benefits both to the confirmed Perſons themſelves, and to the whole Church in general, which may be derived from it.—In doing which, I ſhall confine myſelf to ſuch, as the Inſtitution itſelf ſuppoſes, or humanly ſpeaking, naturally tends to promote,

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If attended with the Seriousness and Devotion which its Importance requires; apart from those spiritual Blessings, which, we reasonably and piously hope, it may draw down from Heaven.—And here the

First I shall mention is, that it makes the Catechizing, or early Instruction of Children in the Principles of Religion, necessary.—A Point, which has been deemed of the utmost Importance to Society, as well as to the Children, by all wise Men, and wise States, in all Ages, and under all the different Professions of Religion. And with regard to ourselves, it is, I think, the Observation of Archbishop *Tillotson*, that, humanly speaking, *Catechizing*, and *the History of the Martyrs*, have been the two great *Pillars* of the *Protestant Religion*.—An Observation, not only judicious in itself, but which evidently shews, that no Man, who is an Enemy to those Instructions, can be a real Friend to this Religion. It is indeed objected in the present Age, that this ought not to be done, because it fills the Mind with Prejudices, and gives it a strong Bias in Favour of those Opinions which are so early instilled into it. Whereas, in order

order to enable Men to judge impartially of Things, their Minds ought not to be influenced by any Prejudices, before they come to a Maturity of Judgment.—In Answer to which, it is readily allowed, that Education does create those Prejudices; but it is insisted on, that from its doing so, both the Benefit of the Child, and the Duty of the Parent or Instructor, arise. Indeed, could our modern Advocates for Infidelity and Impiety tell us, how to keep the Mind free from *all* Prejudices; could they really preserve it that *blank Table* which they so idly dream of, and bring it up to a Maturity of Judgment, without any Bias *against* Religion, as well as *for* it; no Man, who understands the Grounds of our holy Religion, can think it could suffer by such an Experiment.—But, since such is the State of human Nature, that it must be made very different from what it is, before such an Experiment can be fairly tried; since we are so formed, that if Prejudices are not early instilled into the Mind *in Favour of Religion and Virtue*, it will naturally imbibe Prejudices, and unavoidably contract Habits, *in Favour of Irreligion and all kinds of Vice*;

Vice; hence evidently arise great Obligations on the Parent to impress early on the Child such Notions of Things, as tend most to its present and future Happiness; and great Benefit to the Child himself from such Impressions.

And if such be the Case of a religious Education in general, it must be in itself the more important, and the more advantageous to all, in Proportion to the Excellency and the Usefulness of the Principles which are so instilled.—And if in this View we recollect that excellent Summary of Christian Faith and Practice, the *Church Catechism*, which is enjoined to be used in the Case before us; and impartially consider the Tendency of the Principles and Practices there taught, to the present Happiness of every other Person who may be concerned with them, as well as the eternal Happiness of the Children so instructed; it must carry with it irresistible Convictions of the Wisdom and Use of an Institution, which requires and provides, that Youth be very early taught, not only Temperance, but Modesty, and Purity, with regard to themselves; not Justice only, but Affection and Love, to all others in every Station and Relation

Relation in Life; and to the public Order, Submiſſion, and Peace. Little Effect, indeed, is to be expected even from theſe excellent Inſtructions, if Children are only taught them by Rote, as Matter of Form, when very young, and are afterwards neglected and left to themſelves; and therefore it is

A great Benefit of Confirmation, that thereby Youth and others are called upon to recollect, and take upon themſelves the Profeſſion of theſe Principles, and the Practice of theſe Precepts, at an Age, when they are able to ſee the Reaſonableneſs of the one, and the Neceſſity of the other. It is neceſſary, that they ſhould know, recollect, and conſider them in the moſt particular Manner, in order to their coming to this Rite; and in the Office itſelf, they oblige themſelves to that Profeſſion and Practice, by a ſolemn Vow to God.—And what can be likely to produce the bleſſed Fruits of a good Life, if theſe Methods will not?—When can Perſons enter into ſuch Engagements with ſo great a Probability of Influence upon their Conduct, as before vicious Habits have taken Poſſeſſion of them, and hardened their

Hearts

Hearts againſt good Impreſſions?—All, indeed, may be fruſtrated, and too often is, by the Wickedneſs of Mens Lives after theſe Engagements. But it is not the Buſineſs of Religion to force Men to be good, whether they will or no; and the moſt wicked ſure muſt allow, that theſe Things were great Checks and Reſtraints upon them, before they gave themſelves up to do Iniquity. All that Religion does, is to ſhew Men the Neceſſity of right Principles, and a good Life, by ſuch Reaſons and Arguments, as leave them inexcuſable, if they will not be influenced by them: And all, Parents and Inſtructors can do, is to inſtill thoſe Reaſons and Arguments, at ſuch Times, and in ſuch a Manner, as is moſt likely to produce the happy Effects deſired. At leaſt, this is all that can be done, in the preſent State of Things; and when this is done, we have great Reaſon to hope for a Bleſſing from God, to Whoſe Providence and Aſſiſtance the *Event muſt be left*, in all Caſes whatſoever. And

Laſtly; as the Rite of Confirmation thus tends to promote the Happineſs of the State, and of every Individual in it; ſo does it to pre-

preſerve the Peace and Unity of the Church; if conſidered as a religious Society. The Apoſtles left the Government of the Churches they founded, to Biſhops; every Church in the Chriſtian World, for above Fifteen hundred Years together, was governed by a Biſhop; and to him, in all ordinary Caſes at leaſt, was reſerved the Power of Confirmation, as the Governor of it. To adhere ſtedfaſtly to that Communion, unto which the confirmed were admitted by him, was ever thought a Duty of the greateſt Importance, both in Obedience to them *who were ſet over them in the Lord*, and for the Preſervation of Order, Peace, and Unity in the Church: And to ſeparate from this Communion in any Caſe, unleſs he made the Terms of it ſinful, was ever deemed the heinous Sin of Schiſm.—Which, if conſidered by thoſe, who are brought to be confirmed, would teach them to *keep the Unity of The Spirit in the Bond of Peace*; and, if impartially attended to by others, it might be a Means of correcting thoſe Prejudices, allaying thoſe Heats, and healing thoſe Diviſions among us, whoſe fatal Effects on true Piety every good Man laments, and with which

which the common Enemy of Proteſtants ſo frequently reproaches us.

To conclude then; theſe are ſome of the general and public Benefits, which may reaſonably be expected from the due Obſervance of this Rite; and which the Continuance of it does more or leſs produce, in Proportion to the Attention which is paid to it.—And theſe, together with the ſpiritual and perſonal Advantages, which are more immediately in View, appear to me to be more than ſufficient, to ſhew thoſe, who have hitherto neglected it, the Importance of thus taking their Chriſtian Profeſſion upon themſelves; to ſhew thoſe, who now intend to do ſo, the Serioufneſs and Attention with which they ought to prepare themſelves for it; and to convince Parents and Maſters, that it is incumbent upon them to bring their Children and Servants to it, if they either conſider their private Intereſt in the Relations in which they ſtand; or their Duty, either as good Subjects in the State, or as faithful Members of the Church of *Chriſt*. To whom, &c.

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THE

THE

DUTY

Of following the

Faith and Converſation

OF

DEPARTED SAINTS.

Y

The Duty of following the Faith and Converſation of departed Saints.

SERMON XIV.

HEB. xiii. 7, 8.

—*Whoſe Faith follow; conſidering the End of their Converſation Jeſus Chriſt. The Same Yeſterday, To-day, and for ever.*

THE Perſons, of whom the Author of this Epiſtle more immediately ſpeaks, were the Paſtors and Governors of the Church among the *Hebrews*, after their Converſion to the Faith: And hence *Theodoret* underſtands this Paſſage particularly of St. *Stephen, of James the Brother of John, of James ſurnamed the Juſt, and of ſeveral others, whom the Jews had put to death* for their Adherence to the Goſpel. But as the

Admonition may be with equal Juſtice applied to all others, who have gone before us, in the Way to Heaven; I ſhall not at preſent confine it to any particular Perſons, but extend it to all that are dead in The Lord, with whom we are ſtill in ſome Communion; and underſtand it, as implying a Command to *follow* their *Faith*, and to *conſider the End of their Converſation*.—Our Remembrance of the Saints departed is on many Accounts uſeful to us. It teaches us Thankfulneſs to God for their Conſtancy and Courage, in fighting *the good Fight*, before us; and it animates us, by a Proſpect of their Labours and Succeſſes, to be ſteady and couragious in following their Examples.—So that this terminates, not in the Honour and Glory of the Dead, but in the Benefit and Advantage of the Living. By carrying back our View to the glorious Company of the Apoſtles, the goodly Fellowſhip of the Prophets, and the noble Army of Martyrs, which have gone before us in the Paths of Piety and Peace; and, by leading us to examine into their Courage and Conduct; it repreſents to ourſelves the Beauty and Lovelineſs of their Virtues and

Per-

Perſeverance, and muſt ſtrengthen us in our good Reſolutions, by theſe lively Patterns of an exemplary Piety, and confirm our Hopes, by their preſent Happineſs and Glory.

Such a Commemoration therefore can be no Superſtition, nor give any juſt Offence to a pious Mind. And ſuch only is admitted and encouraged in our Church. Both the Doctrines and Practices of a foreign Communion, too juſtly cenſurable in this reſpect, are condemned and rejected by her: She dares not impiouſly and preſumptuouſly to erect herſelf into a Tribunal, to judge of the Merits, and confer the Rewards of her Children; and thereby anticipate the Determinations of the Great Day of The Lord: She preſumes not to look into the Hearts of Men, or to open, by Violence, the Gates of Heaven; and much leſs dares ſhe pay Homage to the Idols of her own making, and invocate and worſhip thoſe whom ſhe has intruded there: She abhors the fulſome Flatteries, and lying Miracles, of their Panegyrics and Legends; diſdains the Pomp and Solemnity of their Superſtitions; and is concerned to ſee the Cuſtoms and Corruptions of the Deifications of

heathen Rome adopted and practiſed in the Canonizations of the *Chriſtian*. Theſe are indeed gainful and glittering Doctrines and Practices; highly profitable to the See, where this Fund of Treaſure is ſuppoſed to be laid up; and but too well adapted to dazzle the Eyes, and captivate the Minds, of ignorant and deluded Men: But they ſtrike at the very Vitals of true Piety and Religion; they make both the Purchaſe of Virtue, and the Rewards of it, cheap and eaſy; they tend to teach Men to place all their Religion in outward Shews and Appearances; and the more they put on of the Forms of Godlineſs, the more they leſſen the real Power, and undermine the Foundations of it.

Whereas on the contrary, the Deſign of our Commemoration of any holy and good Men, who have gone before us, is to teach us to ſubdue Sin, and work out Righteouſneſs; to encourage us in our Conflicts with our ſpiritual Adverſaries, by ſhewing us thoſe who have been Conquerors already; and to point out to us the Faith, the Virtue, the Conſtancy, the Courage, the Patience, the Magnanimity, and the Perſeverance of them when on Earth,

Earth, as absolutely necessary to be pursued and attained by us, if we would be Partakers with them *of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light.* With this View, the primitive Christians visited the Tombs, and solemnized the Memory, of their Martyrs; thereby strengthening their own Resolutions, and confirming their Zeal and Desires of following them in their Way to Glory, thro' all Opposition, even thro' Persecutions, Sufferings, and Death. And in Vindication of the Practice of our Church in this Matter, we have, I conceive, the Authority of an express Command in the Words of the Text, *whose Faith follow, considering the End of their Conversation. Jesus Christ The Same Yesterday, To-day, and for ever.* Which Words of the Apostle lead me to treat of these three Things:

I. To enquire what is here meant by that *Faith* which we are commanded to follow.

II. To enquire what Advantages arise to us from having had others to walk in this Faith before us. And

III. To observe, that we can want no Motive to follow them, if we remem-

ber that *Jesus Christ is The Same Yesterday, To-day, and for ever.*

I. As to the first, what is here meant by the *Faith* which we are commanded to *follow*; here is implied first, Faith, properly so called; secondly, Piety and good Works; and thirdly, Perseverance.—The first Thing implied is *Faith*, properly so called, or a firm Belief of the Doctrines and Promises of the Gospel, and a stedfast Adherence to them, in Spight of all Opposition. *Without* this, *it is impossible to please* God; and with it, we shall find no Difficulties too hard for us; if we consider its past Effects on the Saints. This will shew us the mighty Power of God, and the Efficacy of His Grace; we shall be convinced, that all Difficulties are to be overcome by it, and all Opposition will fall before it; that the secret Machinations of Hell have been defeated by it, and the weak Malice and Opposition of Men subdued with Triumph. The Fire has often lost its burning Terrors, and the Rack, the Dread of its Tortures. All Shame and Pain have been despised through a stedfast Belief in the Divine Promises and Merits of The Blessed *Jesus*, Who Himself

was

was *made perfect through Sufferings.* The heathen Tribunals, in the primitive Times, were frequently crouded with Confeſſors, of all Ranks and Conditions, who were ready to offer up themſelves in Sacrifice, rather than deny the Faith; and even the Chriſtian Women were brave enough to conquer the Fears and Tenderneſs of their Sex, nay, to attend with Chearfulneſs their own Children to the Flames, and glut their cruel Tyrants, who required Apoſtacy from them, with their Blood. Through Faith, as our Apoſtle elegantly and pathetically deſcribes its Effects, *Kingdoms were ſubdued, the Mouths of Lions ſtopped, and the Violence of Fire quenched*; many *were ſtoned, were ſawn aſunder, were ſlain with the Sword*; whilſt *others, of whom the World was not worthy, wandered about in Sheep Skins, and Goat Skins, in Deſarts, and in Mountains, and in Dens, and Caves of the Earth, being deſtitute, afflicted, tormented.*

And as all human Powers and Terrors have been often found too weak to reſiſt this Divine Principle, ſo will the Powers of Darkneſs be ever made to flee before it. And therefore, when St. *Paul* is urging to his

his *Ephesians* the Necessity of *putting on the whole Armour of God, if they would stand against the Wiles of the Devil*; because, says he, *we wrestle not* only *against Flesh and Blood, but against Principalities and Powers, and against the Rulers of the Darkness of this World*; he, *above all* Things, presses upon them the Necessity of taking the *Shield of Faith*; *wherewith they should be able to quench all the fiery Darts of the wicked.* And we can have no room to doubt, but that we shall likewise have the same happy Success, if we follow the same Methods, and are animated and guided by a resolute and immoveable Faith; then we may be assured, as they have conquered, so we shall also conquer.

The second Thing implied by the Faith of those whom we are commanded to follow, is Piety and Purity of Life. Faith, in the Scriptures, is a Word of very extensive Signification. It includes a lively and operative Principle; not confined to barren and fruitless Speculations, but exerting itself in all good Works.

All true Religion tends to Practice, and terminates in it. As the Glory of God and

the Happineſs of Man are its Ends; ſo the Precepts of Virtue and Obedience are the Means, by which it directs us to purſue them: And as Chriſtianity is of all Religions the moſt wiſely calculated to promote thoſe great Ends, ſo does it of all others lay the ſtrongeſt Obligations upon us to Purity of Life and Manners. It lays its Foundations deeply in the Mind of Man, and penetrates into all the active Powers of his Soul: It requires, that the Divinity of its Doctrines ſhould appear in a vigorous and active Obedience; and we are therefore told, that, *as the Body without the Spirit is dead, ſo Faith without* good *Works, is dead alſo.* To ſubſtitute the Shell of Religion, for the Subſtance of it; to place its Efficacy and Merit in a forward Zeal, or in any outward Obſervances; whilſt the weightier Matters of the Law, Juſtice, Mercy, and Truth are neglected; to commute for the Indulgence of our favourite Luſts by numbered Prayers, uncommanded Severities, or forced Bounties; is doubtleſs one of the Artifices of that Deceiver, who would fain, in Appearance, *transform himſelf to an Angel of Light*; and it is very agreeable to the corrupt Inclinations.

clinations and Paſſions of Men, who would very willingly rather have true Religion be any thing, than what it is, namely, a Conqueſt over themſelves, and a conſtant Courſe of good Works, flowing from good Principles.

But this was a Practice unknown to the primitive Church; the Profeſſors of the Goſpel, in its Infant State, were untainted with thoſe Corruptions, which Power and Affluence afterwards brought in with them; the Chriſtian Apologiſts could boldly appeal to the Innocence of the Lives of Chriſtians, in Proof of the Truth of their Profeſſion; they were both peaceable and pure, were both vigilant and active in their Duty, and, in Imitation of the Example which their Bleſſed Lord had ſet them, they *went about doing Good.* If therefore we will form our Judgment of our Duty from them, and imitate the Examples of the holy Saints; we ſhall ever find, that they governed themſelves by St. *James's* Maxim, and that with them true *Religion and undefiled* was ever thought to be this, in the Faith and Fear of God, and in Obedience to His Laws, to viſit the *Fatherleſs and Widows in their Affliction,* to relieve,

as

as far as in them lay, the Misfortunes, and to promote the Happineſs of Mankind, *and to keep themſelves unſpotted from* the Vices and Corruptions of *the World.*

The laſt Thing implied in the Faith of the Saints, is Conſtancy and Perſeverance: And this is what ſome underſtand to be chiefly meant by thoſe Words of the Text, *the End of their Converſation.* As if the Apoſtle had ſaid, Follow the Faith of thoſe *who have the Rule over you, and have ſpoken to you the Word of God,* as in other Things, ſo moſt eſpecially in this, that they perſevered *unto the End.* However this be, it is certain, that true Piety is not a ſudden Start of Paſſion, or Flaſh of Temper, but a conſtant, regular, and uniform Purſuit of our Duty. It is a continual Progreſs from one Degree of Perfection to another, an uninterrupted Conteſt with the Enemies of our Salvation, till the Grave puts an End to Life and Temptation together, *and we come* through it *to a perfect Man, to the Meaſure of the Stature of the Fulneſs of Chriſt.* We have therefore *great Need of Patience, that we faint not,* and of Steadfaſtneſs and Vigour in our Chriſtian Calling, leſt

left after having once *put our Hands to the Plow*, we *look back*, and thereby become deprived *of the Kingdom of God*. And what then can be Matter of greater Encouragement to us therein, than to take a View of the Conduct and Behaviour of the Saints, who have gone before us? Who were labouring, but not tired; fighting, but not overcome; and if at any Time they stumbled, or fell, they rose again with fresh Vigour, and pursued their Journey with fresh Alacrity and Chearfulness. What can be more animating and enlivening to us, than to behold them thus moving on with a regular and steady Pace, and gaining Ground Day by Day, in their Way to Heaven? than to consider them in that glorious Light, in which St. *Paul* beautifully presses upon the *Philippians* his own Example, when he says, *Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended*, or attained to the Prize, *but this one Thing I do, forgetting those Things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those Things which are before, I press toward the Mark, for the Prize of the high Calling of God, in Christ Jesus?* Terms taken from the public Exercises of the Ancients, and wherein

wherein the Apoſtle elegantly reſembles his Conſtancy and Perſeverance in his Duty, to the Zeal and Heat of a Charioteer in his Courſe, who carries the Prize of the Conteſt all along in his View, and who, without any Regard to thoſe behind him, is ever earneſt and puſhing forward, till he has obtained it.—But of this more in inquiring

II. Secondly, what Benefits we receive from having had others to walk in this *Faith* before us. And theſe are, that their Examples both ſhew us, that our Duty is practicable; and that we are not ſingular in diſcharging it; and that they will powerfully excite us to follow them in all their Doings, and particularly in Love and Charity to one another.

The Harſhneſs and Severity of the Precepts of Religion are very much ſoftened and removed by the gentle Influences of a winning Example. The Stiffneſs and Rigour of the Rule is much abated, and it is made more eaſy and plain, and as it were better ſuited and adapted to us, by the View of the wiſe Behaviour of one who walks regularly in it. And therefore wiſe Men have ever thought

thought Example a moſt effectual Method of Inſtruction, as leading us on moſt gently and humanely in the Paths of Virtue; and as moſt eaſily reconciling us to ſubmit to her Diſcipline, and veiling, as it were, its Severities from us. We, who are apt to be much terrified and affrighted at the Difficulty of the Laws, can yet find nothing ſhocking or frightful in the Lives of thoſe who obey them: And it will much help to reconcile us to the Commandments of the Goſpel, if we view them as exemplified in the Lives of the Saints. This will ſhew us Men of like Paſſions and Infirmities with ourſelves, walking on in a uniform Obedience to the Statutes of their Lord; will demonſtrate, that our Wickedneſs and Diſobedience is not founded in any inſuperable Difficulties of the Command, but in our own Negligence or Perverſeneſs; and will therefore leave us without any Excuſe from our Frailties and Weakneſs, if we do not *walk by the ſame Rule, and mind the ſame Things.*

Again; as it will remove all Objection from the Difficulty of our Duty; ſo will it entirely take away our Fears of *Singularity* in performing it. The Mind of Man is ſo formed

for Society, and is so apt to be modelled and governed by it, that a Desire of imitating others, generally makes the strongest and quickest Impressions upon us, and we are often ashamed to be singular and alone, even in our Duty; whilst it gives us Confidence and Encouragement, false indeed; to *go with a Multitude*, though *to do Evil.* And therefore, says the wise Man, *as Iron sharpens Iron, so does the Countenance of a Man his Friend*; it gives a kind of Sanction and Authority to what he does, and confirms him in his Judgment of the Goodness of his Actions. It is giving a Testimony and Consent to our Opinions and Behaviour; which will ever afford us double Pleasure and Satisfaction, when supported by the Approbation of other Men, because we shall be thereby easily led to conclude, that they are therefore more rational, and more wise. And as the modest and the humble are ever diffident, and distrustful of themselves, it will ever be a Comfort and Encouragement to them, to find themselves in the Company of others who attend and walk with them.—And that they may not want this Advantage in the Progress of their

Duty, let them look back on the Saints, Martyrs, and Confessors, who have before run the same Race, and they will find themselves engaged in the worthiest Society, and attended by the best of Men. These blessed Spirits will, by their wise and powerful Examples, confirm the good Man in all his Ways, and direct him in all his Doings; will remove the Odium and Distaste of his being singular and opinionative; will give him a just Contempt for the foolish and unthinking, when he can have Recourse to many Precedents of the wise and prudent; and it will ever give him Pleasure and Confidence to be assured, that *he so walks even as they walked.*—Nay, our Reflections on the Saints will not only countenance us in our Duty, they will also strongly excite us to follow them.

As the Contagion of Vice is spreading, so are the Beauties of Religion and Virtue attractive. They are not only regular, but charming; not only rational, but lovely. An attentive View of a good Man, bravely struggling with all the Difficulties and Temptations of Life, steddily encountering all the Powers of this World, and the

Powers of Darkness; obstinately retaining his Integrity in Spight of all Opposition; and thus resolutely going on from conquering to conquer; Such a View will both warm the Mind, and rejoice the Heart. It will not only lead us to pity or commend him, but it will strongly move us to imitate his Conduct. By displaying the Loveliness of an heroic Piety in so clear a Light, it will enflame the Mind with ardent Desires of it; and not barely command our Applause for his having done well, but urge us to wish and labour to walk in his Steps.—Thus Virtue cloaths itself with a visible Shape, displays its numberless Beauties to the Eyes of Men; and no Wonder then, if it cannot fail to attract the Admiration, and excite the Delight and Love of every Beholder, who has not lost all Relish of what is truely praiseworthy and amiable. Who can attend holy *Job*, in all his Afflictions and Sufferings; view the Conflicts of the Man, the Husband, and the Father; and see him, in the sudden Loss of Fortune, Family, and Health, resolute and resigned; without readily submitting his own Concerns to the Guidance of God's Providence, and saying

of the little Afflictions that are become his Portion, *It is The Lord, let Him do what ſeemeth Him good?*—Who can view the royal Pſalmiſt in his penitential Humiliations, ſee the Anguiſh of his Soul, and hear the Complaints of his Lips, *when his Sins had taken ſuch hold upon him, that he was not able to look up*; without feeling an inward Remorſe and Dread within his own Breaſt, for his many Offences and Tranſgreſſions againſt the Law of The Almighty? Or who can join with him in the elevated Strains of an enflamed Piety and Love, when the Mercies of God exalt his Mind, and the Praiſes of God are in his Mouth; without being very ſenſible of the great Debt of Duty and Gratitude which he owes his Maker, for the innumerable Mercies that ſurround him?—Who can travel with the bleſſed Apoſtles, from one Kingdom to another, and behold their Conſtancy and Courage in the Execution of their Divine Commiſſion, in publiſhing the glad Tidings of the Goſpel, in the midſt of Praiſes and Defamations, *through evil Report and good Report, as Deceivers, and yet true, as perſecuted, but not forſaken, as caſt down, but not deſtroyed*;

destroyed; and not admire That Spirit, by which they were actuated, or not be enflamed with Zeal for that most holy Religion, which they thus magnanimously published and defended?

And as the Examples of the Saints must thus excite us to follow them in *all their Doings*; so particularly to imitate their Love and Charity to one another. The distinguishing Mark of Christian Communion, ought to be Christian Love; united Hands and Hearts in promoting the Welfare of the whole Body, whereof *Christ* Himself is the Head; and a ready Concurrence, in all those Things especially, which tend to the spiritual Advantage of the helpless Members of it. And to promote this, our Remembrance of, and Communion with, the Saints do concur; for as they were tried and approved by Afflictions and Contests, so they were made perfect by Love.—And as we partake of the same Ordinances which were administred to them; are Members of the same mystical Body; and have the same *Communion with The Father, and with Jesus Christ, whom He has sent*; so we ought to have the same Christian

Love and Regard for one another; and the ſame Unanimity in labouring to ſupport the weak, and inſtruct the ignorant in the Ways of Salvation. As we have The *Same Lord, the ſame Faith, and the ſame Baptiſm*; we ſhould pay our Obedience to the ſame Laws, and walk by the ſame Rule.—To which we are yet more powerfully and more affectingly excited, in that we have the *ſame Hope of our Calling*. Which leads me to obſerve briefly, in the

III. Third and laſt Place, that we can want no Motive to follow them, if we remember, that *Jeſus Chriſt is The Same Yeſterday, To-day, and for ever*. What Encouragement may Chriſtians receive from this exalted and truly divine Character of their Lord? His Love to His Diſciples is not at all abated ſince He left the World; neither is His Arm ſhortened, that it cannot ſave. His Affection to them is, like His Nature, eternal, and His Power without Limitation, or Poſſibility of Change. Thoſe whom He loves *He will love to the End*; and in the End, will bring them to the *ſame Place where He is*. The Bleſſed *Jeſus* ſhould there-

therefore be ever in our View, both as The Author, and Immenſe Rewarder of our Faith. For our Remembrance of the Saints ought not to confine itſelf to their Virtues, but ſhould raiſe us from thence to the delightful Conſideration of the Rewards of them. That the Glories of *Chriſt's* Kingdom may draw us to Him, the Pleaſures at His Right Hand inflame us with His Love. The Reaſon given by the Apoſtle for *Moſes's* Contempt of the Court and Treaſures of *Egypt* was this; that he *had Reſpect unto the Recompence of Reward.* And as the ſame Crown of Glory is laid up for us, we may have the ſame comfortable Reſpect and Regard to it; may hope, if we conſtantly hold out in this Day of Trial, to ſurvive this wretched and miſerable State, and have all its Infirmities and Imperfections eternally removed from us; may hope, *to ſit down with Abraham, and Iſaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of God*; to join with the bleſſed Spirits, whoſe Faith we now follow, in endleſs Praiſes to The King of Kings, and Lord of Lords; and to *ſhine as the Stars in the Firmament of Heaven, for ever and ever.*

OUR IGNORANCE OF THE Secret Things and Mysteries OF GOD CONSIDERED.

Our Ignorance of the ſecret Things and Myſteries of God conſidered.

SERMON XV.

DEUT. xxix. 29.

The ſecret Things belong unto The Lord our God.

PRIDE, ſays the Son of *Sirach*, *was not made for Man*; nor indeed Haughtineſs of Spirit *for him that is born of a Woman.*—The Infirmities and Imperfections of human Nature and its beſt Performances, are ſo many and great, as very ill become that exceſſive Value and Eſteem, which we uſually ſet on what we attain, and what we do.—Even the nobler Faculties of our Minds are limited and confined. They are indeed wiſely adapted to our preſent Wants and Neceſſities; but fall very ſhort of that univerſal Knowledge and Comprehenſion of Things

Things, which we are fond of grafping at, and which fome Men vainly and abfurdly imagine, they can and do attain.—The Light of the Mind, if we would compare what we know with what we know not, would perhaps appear to be lefs than that of the fmallefl Spark, when compared with the Sun; and yet we often, out of a vain Opinion of our Abilities, employ great Pains and Labour in endeavouring to learn what we can never find out; and fome Men are fo confident of their own Underftandings, as to make them the Meafure and Standard of all Truth, and impiouffly to reject every thing as falfe and abfurd, which they cannot fully comprehend.—The Confequence of which is Vanity, Impertinence, and Affectation, in the Affairs of Life, and both Herefy and Scepticifm in Religion.—Whereas, if we would content ourfelves within the Boundaries, which The God of Nature has fet to our Faculties, we fhould be moft ready to acquiefce in His Difpenfations, and fubmit to the Revelations of His Will; and we fhould be more humble, and more charitable in our Sentiments of ourfelves, and one another.

In

In order to these Ends, it may be of use to us to remember the Caution, which *Moses* here gives the *Jews*, that *the secret Things belong unto The Lord our God*, i. e. that the Powers of our Minds are at present bounded and narrow, are not designed to take in the whole Compass of Nature, but those Things only, which are useful and convenient for us; and that we should be content with those Degrees of Knowledge we are capable of, and should neither usurp on the divine Prerogative, by affecting to know what is beyond our Reach, nor impiously reject the Revelations which God has given us, because some Matters contained in them are above our Reason, and past our Comprehension.—For these are some of those *secret Things*, which *belong*, not to us, but *unto The Lord our God.*

In speaking to which Words, I shall

I. Give two or three Instances of these *secret Things*, and consider in what Sense they properly *belong to The Lord our God.* And

II. Endeavour to shew, how far we ourselves are concerned in them, and what

what Duties necessarily arise from our Ignorance of them.

I. The first Instance I shall give of these *secret Things*, is the Essence and Attributes of God. His Nature is to us *unsearchable*, and His Perfections *past finding out*. His Existence is indeed most certain, and is as demonstrable, as perhaps any one Truth, which the Mind of Man can receive: But His real Nature and Essence is beyond the Powers of Man to conceive, and, as far as we can judge, beyond those of any other created Being whatever.—Since it is as clear and certain, as any Thing can be, that nothing can produce nothing; it is likewise as certainly and necessarily true, that there must have been, from all Eternity, Some Cause and Author of all other Things. And this Fountain of Being, from whose Power and Will all other Things came, is what we understand and signify by the Term, God.—But the precise Nature of this Power and Wisdom, which have thus exerted and shewn themselves to us; what they are, and wherein they consist; is as much beyond our Understandings to comprehend,

prehend, as it is beyond our Power to produce any of those Effects which daily flow from them.—That *all Things were made by Him, and without Him was not any Thing made, that was made*; that all Things *live and move in* Him, and that without Him nothing could subsist that does subsist; and that all Excellencies and Perfections, of all visible and invisible Beings, do unite and center in Him, in the most perfect Manner; these are Truths certainly to be known and understood by Men, *by the Things that do appear*. But farther than this, our natural Knowledge neither does, nor can at present extend. Could we comprehend the Nature of God, it would not only be finite, but confined within a very narrow Compass; And we must rank all Knowledge of this kind among those *secret Things*, which *belong unto The Lord our God*, Who only knows what He is, and how He exists, and can alone search out the otherwise unfathomable Depths of His own Eternal and Infinite Perfections.—And as we know not the Nature of God, so neither can we,

Secondly, understand *His Counsels*, or explain and discover His Motives of Action, and

and ſhew the Reaſon and Deſign of all the preſent Acts, and Diſpenſations of His Providence.—His Wiſdom, Goodneſs, and Juſtice, are indeed ſo evident in ſome of them, that *he who runs may read them:* But others, eſpecially the more general and public ones, ſurprize and confound the buſy Mind of Man, and at firſt Sight ſhew us, that *His Ways are not as our Ways, nor His Thoughts as our Thoughts.*

Why He ſhould have deferred the Creation of Man ſo long, till within the Space of Six thouſand Years; why, after Creation, He ſhould confine the Knowledge of Himſelf and His Religion to one Family, and one ſmall Nation only, while all the reſt of human Race were wandering in Ignorance and Idolatry; why the Redemption of Mankind ſhould be wrought out in ſo ſtupendous a Manner as by the Death of The Son of God; and why, to this Day, the Knowledge of Salvation, and of His Son, ſhould be ſo much confined as it is, and much the greater Part of Mankind be involved in the groſſeſt Ignorance, Idolatry, and Barbarity; theſe are Queſtions, which, I conceive, muſt ultimately, if not wholly, reſolve them-

themselves into the secret Purposes of His divine Will, *by Whom and for Whom* they were performed. St. *Paul* professes himself unable to comprehend these Proceedings, and cries out in Amazement, with respect to such Occurrences as these, *O the Depth of the Riches of the Wisdom and Goodness of God, how unsearchable are His Thoughts, and His Ways past finding out!* And if an Apostle, who was *caught up into the third Heavens*, was thus forced to stop in Astonishment and Adoration; unassisted Reason ought surely to resolve all its Doubts into the same Wisdom and Goodness, and to acquiesce in the Dispensations of That Invisible, Infinite, and Incomprehensible Being, of Whom is the Earth and the Fulness thereof.

And with respect to more private and more particular Cases, the Revolutions of States and Governments, and every particular Man's Sufferings or Enjoyments in Life; it is He, that *pulleth down and setteth up*; it is He, that *maketh poor and maketh rich, and divideth to every Man severally as He willeth*; and that, often without any visible Regard to the Characters or Conduct

of Men.—And unleſs therefore we could ſee thro' the whole Chain of His Proceedings; unleſs we could clearly diſcover all the Conſequences and Connexions of Things; we are as little able to judge of His Counſels by the little we know of them, as we are to judge of a Volume, by the Sight of one Line; or of a magnificent Building, by examining only a ſingle Stone thereof.—Could we take a View of the whole Series of God's Providence, His Wiſdom and Goodneſs would doubtleſs appear in every Period of it. But the Portions we ſee of it are ſo few and ſcanty, and His Will and Purpoſes are ſo far beyond our Reach, that the trueſt Judgment we can form of them is, in the Words of the Pſalmiſt, that His *Way is in the Sea, and* His *Paths in the great Waters*, and that His *Footſteps are not known.*

Laſtly, there is yet another Inſtance of theſe *ſecret Things*; and that is, the Thoughts and Inclinations, and inward State of Mens Minds.—To know theſe, is the peculiar Prerogative of Heaven; and He alone, Who inhabits there, can look into the Souls of Men, and *underſtand* their

Thoughts

Thoughts long before.—And therefore the wiſeſt Lawgivers have in their Laws and Conſtitutions been forced to overlook the Thoughts and Intentions of the Heart, as beyond their Province; otherwiſe than as they are made known and manifeſt by outward Actions. And as every Man, with reſpect to his future and eternal State, has his own *Maſter, to* Whom alone he will *ſtand or fall*; ſo God alone can know, how far the Sinner has reconciled himſelf to Him by availing Penitence, and accepted by a ſtedfaſt Faith the Mediation and Promiſes of His Bleſſed Son.

Theſe are ſome of thoſe many Inſtances, which might be given, of *Things* which are to us *ſecret*, and are not by any Application knowable by us. They *belong to The Lord our God*, as the ſole Unerring Judge of them; Who Alone is to act and determine therein, as His Wiſdom, Goodneſs, and other Attributes ſhall move Him.—But becauſe our Religion is neceſſarily affected by them, I have inſiſted upon theſe; and ſhall from the Mention of them proceed to

II. The ſecond Particular, which is to ſhew, how far we are nevertheleſs concern-

ed in them, and what Duties necessarily arise from our Ignorance of them.

And first then, though we cannot comprehend the Nature of God, yet it is necessary, that we should acquire some clear and settled Notions of Him, as the Object of our Faith, and the Foundation of all Religion.—But for this, the Knowledge of His Existence, and of His Attributes and Relations to Us, is sufficient.—The true Worship we are obliged to pay Him, consists in honouring, *i. e.* loving, fearing, obeying, and confiding in Him; in flying to Him as our Defence and Succour in the Day of our Distress; and acknowledging the Blessings He bestows upon us, in Songs of Praise and Thanksgiving. And in order to this, it is necessary, that we know Him to be The Author and Preserver of ourselves and the Universe in which we live; and that He gives us all we do or can receive; and that Wisdom, Power, Justice, and Goodness are seated in Him, in the most eminent and incomprehensible Manner. For the Worship we pay or owe Him is founded in His Benefactions to us, and in His Power and Will to preserve or to destroy us.—And these we may receive

certain Assurances and Demonstrations of, without knowing what that Nature is, to which these Attributes belong, or endeavouring vainly and impiously to search out the unfathomable Abyss of Infinity, which no Man knoweth or can know; no, nor the Angels of God in Heaven.

So that the Knowledge, we are obliged to have of God, relates to His Worship and our Duty, and not to the gaining any adequate Ideas of His Essence, which it were Folly and Madness in us to affect, and impossible to attain. And the Duty, that necessarily arises from our insuperable Ignorance here, is plainly this, that we should readily receive and embrace those Revelations of His Nature, which He Himself has given us.

As He alone knows, so He alone can inform us, what He is. Which since He has been pleased in some measure to do, in the holy Scriptures; our absolute Inability otherwise to know, or in any wise to comprehend His Nature, makes an implicit Assent to all His Declarations of Himself a necessary Duty. For that Inability to know, implies an Inability in us to judge of His

Essence; and in Cases, wherein we can form no Judgment ourselves, the Testimony of God is a sure Foundation for our ready and firm Assent to whatever He reveals.— Otherwise, if we might reject revealed Doctrines, because we cannot comprehend them, when at the same time we grant that the subject Matter of them is incomprehensible by us; we plainly run ourselves into this Absurdity, that we take upon us to judge and reject those Opinions as unreasonable, of which we allow we cannot judge at all; and peremptorily determine those Doctrines to be false, of whose Truth or Falshood we can of ourselves know nothing.

The only reasonable Doubt in this Case is, whether God has indeed revealed them. For if it be sufficiently proved, that the Books, which are said to contain such Doctrines, are from Him; and that such Doctrines are really contained in those Books; His Authority is sufficient to command an implicit Belief and Reception of them. For such a Belief, tho' obscure and imperfect, as to the subject Matter of those Opinions of which we cannot judge, is yet clear and reasonable

ſonable with reſpect to the Foundation on which it ſtands; and in this Caſe it is neither fooliſh nor abſurd to believe; but it is both, not to believe God, when He declares Things to us which are above our Reaſon, and exceed our Capacities.

And ſuppoſing then that the Scriptures are the Word of God, and that they plainly declare, that in The Godhead there are Three Perſons, and that The Father is God, The Son is God, and The Holy Ghoſt is God; which I apprehend they very clearly teach; in this Caſe, our diſbelieving or rejecting this Doctrine, becauſe we cannot conceive or comprehend *how* They are ſo, is tranſgreſſing our Duty; and is altogether as unreaſonable, as it would be for a blind Man to deny, that there is any Diſtinction between Light and Darkneſs, or between different Colours, becauſe he cannot perceive it.

And this way of Reaſoning is likewiſe very ſtrong and concluſive, with reſpect to all the other incomprehenſible Truths which are revealed in the Scriptures, as well as that of the Ever-bleſſed Trinity.—How God ſhould aſſume the Nature of Man, we cannot conceive; neither can we explain the Manner

how His Grace does operate on the Mind; and yet, when we are expresly told, that *God* was *manifest in the Flesh*, and that *it is God, Who worketh in us both to will and to do*; it is as unreasonable to disbelieve these Things, because we cannot explain or comprehend the Manner of them, as it would be for a Man to deny, that Matter does really adhere together, because no Man can explain how it does so; or to refuse to believe, that Water ever hardened into Ice, because he cannot either explain or conceive the Manner of it. For these natural Effects, notwithstanding the boasted Discoveries, or even the Improvements of Philosophy, must, by all I can learn, resolve themselves at last into the Will of The Creator; and are altogether as incredible to them who have never seen them, as those incomprehensible Doctrines of Revelation. And therefore he, that can disbelieve God, for want of comprehending all He says, may as well disbelieve his Senses, for want of comprehending how they operate; since our Ignorance and Incapacity are equally as strong a Reason, why we should reject the Testimony

mony of our Senſes in the one Caſe, as the Teſtimony of God in the other.

2. As to the particular Acts and Diſpenſations of God's Providence, and the inward State of our Brethren, the other *ſecret Things* mentioned; the Duties, that ariſe from our Ignorance of them, are theſe:

That we ought not to queſtion or neglect general and evident Truths for the Sake of any Difficulties that may ariſe from particular Caſes, of which we cannot be fully informed.

That we ſhould learn from thence Modeſty and Humility of Mind. And

That we ſhew great Tenderneſs and Charity in our Judgments of others.

The firſt Inference drawn from our Ignorance in theſe Caſes, is this, that we ought not to neglect or queſtion general and evident Truths, for the Sake of any Objections that may ariſe againſt them, from particular Caſes, of which we cannot be fully informed. The general Truths, I here mean, are ſuch as theſe; that God is wiſe, and juſt, and good, and cannot contradict Himſelf, or do any thing which is inconſiſtent with theſe Attributes. Which are very clear,

clear, evident, and demonstrative Truths, and are necessary to be retained, as the Foundation of all our Duty to Him; and any Difficulties which arise from the Application of them to particular Cases, ought not to influence us so far, as to make us doubt of or reject them.—Because, if we do, we reject Certainties for what is at present but uncertain; and because we are obliged to believe these general Doctrines, but are neither obliged nor able to know enough of the Circumstances of any particular Cases, to form a just Judgment of their Agreement or Disagreement with these general Rules. And yet, all the Difficulties that are made relating to God's Providence, do arise from hence only, that we find it hard to reconcile some particular Dispensations, and to make them consistent with His Attributes.

Thus, in private Cases, when we observe that wicked Men are prosperous and successful, and the good oppressed and afflicted; and in general ones, when we observe the Barbarity, Ignorance, Idolatry, and indeed all kinds of Brutalities, which are spread over the greatest Part of the Earth; and the

the Wisdom, Happiness, and Purity, which flow from those Fountains of saving Knowledge, which reach but to few Parts of it; our Difficulties and Doubts arise from hence only, that we cannot understand, how the one can consist with God's Justice; and the other with His Goodness and Impartiality.

The true and plain Answer and Solution of which, and all other like Difficulties, is, I conceive, this. That we know and are sure, that God is in general Goodness and Justice itself: But that we neither know enough of the inward and true State of those Men, whom we call good or bad, to be able to judge, how far His Justice is concerned in their Success or their Sufferings; nor are enough acquainted with the Designs, Effects, Consequences, and other Circumstances of these Dispensations, to be able to pronounce from them only, whether He is equal or unequal in the Distribution of them. And that therefore we ought stedfastly to adhere to those general Truths, and defer the Solution of particular Cases, till we can attain a most full and perfect Knowledge of them; not doubting, but that the Removal of our Ignorance and Incapacity

capacity *would justify Him in His Doings, and clear Him when He is judged*; would *make* His *Righteousness as clear as the Light, and* His *just Dealings as the Noon Day.*

Again, what I farther infer from hence is, that we should learn Modesty and Humility of Mind.—We know very little of the Works of God, and much less of His Thoughts and Designs. And having very few Principles to go upon, we should proceed with very great Caution and Reserve, when we pretend to arraign His Judgment; and should be very fearful and diffident how we provoke Him to Anger, by impiously pretending to call in Question His Works. For this is entering upon a Province which is His sole Prerogative, Who alone knows, and alone can judge of what He does; and our Ignorance and Weakness should, in Reason and Duty, turn all our Distrusts, our Doubts, and Uncertainties from Him to ourselves. *Nay, but, O Man,* says the Apostle, *who art thou, that replieſt against God?* What art thou, but Corruption, Dust, and Ashes, and, at best, such as His Hand hath formed thee? *And shall then the Thing formed say unto Him that formed*

formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus?— Remember, that it is He, who *laid the Foundations of the Earth, and stretched out a Line unto it.* Remember, that it is He, who *shutteth up the Sea with Doors*, and *stretcheth out the Heavens like a Curtain*; and *walketh upon the Wings of the Wind.* Remember, that *He is in Heaven, and thou upon Earth*; and therefore let thy Thoughts of *Him* be awful and reverential, of *thyself* mean and humble, and *let thy Words be few.*

Lastly, as Humility of Mind, so likewise Charity and Tenderness in our Judgments of others, is a Duty that arises from our Ignorance of those *secret Things*, and our Inability to know them. The Heart of Man is a Mystery, which no other Man doth or can know; and, as even known and public Crimes demand Forgiveness and Compassion from a Christian Mind; it were inhuman to sacrifice the Reputations, and thereby perhaps the Fortunes and Lives of others to bare Surmises and Conjectures. This is delighting and rejoicing in Iniquity purely for the Sake of it; and it is *scattering Firebrands, Arrows, and Death, and saying, Am I not in Sport?*—And if therefore we

we have not Christianity enough to forgive what we know; our Ignorance makes it a Debt of common Justice and Humanity, not to arraign, condemn, and, as far as in us lies, execute, our Brethren for what we know not.

And with respect to what we call the Judgments of God, thereby meaning the extraordinary Evils and Sufferings of Life, under which some Men labour, and which others make to be sure Signs of some extraordinary Iniquity; the wise Man has long since determined for us, that all such Inferences are unjust and wicked, and that we cannot *know either Love or Hatred by all that is before us.*—And our Blessed Lord, to suppress this wild and unjust Spirit among the *Jews*, expresly condemns and forbids it. When told of the Case of some unhappy Men, who were slain at the Altar, while they were offering up their Sacrifices to God; and of others, on whom a Tower in *Jerusalem* fell and destroyed them; *Think ye*, says He, *that those Galilæans, viz.* those, *whose Blood Pilate mingled with their Sacrifices, were Sinners above all the Galilæans? or that those Eighteen, on whom the*

the Tower in Siloam fell and ſlew them, were Sinners above all Men, that dwell at Jeruſalem? becauſe they ſuffered ſuch Things? I tell you, Nay. But except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh.

Here it is expreſsly declared, that all ſuch Reaſonings from the greater Suffering to the greater Guilt of other Men, are at beſt groundleſs, and perhaps too falſe and unjuſt: And it is implied, that Applications of that kind are then only reaſonable and good, when they are made to ourſelves. We know our own Crimes, and how far we have deſerved what other Men may have ſuffered. And the true Uſe to be made of their Misfortunes, is, not to apply them to any imaginary unknown Sins of theirs, which we are no Judges of; but to thoſe real ones, which our Conſciences diſcover to us in ourſelves; and to learn from thence not to condemn our Brethren, but to repent ourſelves, leſt we alſo periſh.

Whenever we judge raſhly and uncandidly, we tranſgreſs all the Rules of common Equity and Juſtice, and our Cenſures muſt be offenſive in the Sight of God; becauſe they not only imply a want of Humanity and Charity, but are likewiſe an intruding

truding into those *secret Things* ourselves, the Knowledge and Determination of which *belong* only *to The Lord our God.*

And therefore may He, to Whom all Hearts are open, all Desires known, and from Whom no Secrets are hid, so cleanse the Thoughts of our Hearts by the Inspiration of His Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love both Him and one another, and worthily magnify His Holy Name, through *Jesus Christ*, our Lord.

SER-

REFLECTIONS

ON THE

DIVINE

Providence and Mercies,

THE

BEST REMEDIES

Against the Infirmity of

Immoderate Grief and Despair.

Reflections upon the Divine Providence and Mercies, the beſt Remedies againſt the Infirmity of immoderate Grief and Deſpair.

SERMON XVI.

PSALM lxxvii. 10.

I ſaid, This is my Infirmity, but I will remember the Years of the Right Hand of The Moſt Higheſt.

IT has been often juſtly obſerved, that that ſuperior Gaiety and Chearfulneſs, which in Proſperity diſtinguiſhes ſome, as Men of uncommon Life and Vivacity, is, upon a Change of Circumſtances, uſually ſucceeded by as great a Degree of Melancholy and Dejection.—Whether this be, that the ſame defective Reaſon, which can give way to an immoderate Joy and De-

light, will be naturally as defective in ſubduing the contrary Paſſion, upon as preſſing an Occaſion; or, whether it be, that they, who have given a Looſe to their Enjoyments, are the moſt ſenſible of the Difference of a Change, when it comes, and are then the more ſtrongly affected with it; or whether it be, that it pleaſed God to withdraw Himſelf from them, that they may become the more ſenſible of the Folly of their former Vanity, and of the Neceſſity of depending on Him; I ſhall not at preſent make it my Buſineſs to enquire.—All, that is now to be obſerved from it, is, that, be the Cauſe of ſuch Dejection what it will, it is always as much our Folly as our Crime; and that whoever, in Circumſtances of Diſtreſs, gives way to ſuch Dejection, demonſtrates himſelf to be weak, as well as wicked.

One avowed Inſtance of which Weakneſs we here have in the Author of this Pſalm, when he ſays, it was his *Infirmity*.—For what he here ſpeaks of as his Infirmity, was the Deſpondency of his Mind, in Time of Affliction: It was, that *in the Time of Trouble*, he ſo gave way to his Heavineſs, that

that his *Soul refused Comfort*; it was his having so indulged his Grief and Sorrow, as made him ready to give himself over, as one desperate and abandoned; it was his having gone so far as to doubt, whether The Lord had not *utterly forsaken him*, and whether *His Mercy* was not *clean gone for ever*, and *His Promise come utterly to an End* for evermore; it was his questioning, whether *God* had not *forgotten to be gracious, and shut up His loving Kindness in Displeasure.*—All which he here confesses as his Fault, acknowledges to have proceeded only from his own Weakness, and resolves to turn his Thoughts to such Reflections as would most conduce to his Recovery. *I said*, says he, or I acknowledge, *it is mine own Infirmity; but I will remember the Years of the Right Hand of The Most Highest.* I will consider the various Dispensations of God's Providence, and as the most proper Means to raise myself to a Dependance upon Him, I will recollect the past Instances of His Mercy.—*I will remember the Works of The Lord, and call to Mind the Wonders of old Time; I will think also of all Thy Works, and my talking shall be of Thy*

Doings. And accordingly, the remaining Part of this Pſalm is ſpent in ſuch a Recollection, as the moſt proper to convince him of the Equity of God's Dealings with him, and to demonſtrate that *the Way of God is holy*, juſt, and good, and that *there* was *none ſo great a God as* his *God*, nor any ſo *rich in Mercy* to his People.

The Text thus explained, naturally reſolves itſelf into theſe two Particulars.

I. That it is our Infirmity, as well as Fault, our Weakneſs, as well as Crime, to give way to immoderate Grief, under Afflictions and Diſappointments, and to ſink into Dejection and Diſtruſt on account of them.—*I ſaid*, ſuch a Behaviour as *this* was *my Infirmity*.

II. That the moſt proper Means to overcome that Infirmity, and to raiſe ourſelves above Diſtruſt, is to reflect on the Divine Diſpenſations, and to recollect the many ordinary and extraordinary Inſtances of God's Mercy, which have appeared in the conſtant Courſe of His Providence: *But I will*

remem-

remember the Years of the Right Hand of The Most Highest.

The first Particular is, that to give way to immoderate Grief under Afflictions and Disappointments, and to sink into a Dejection of Mind, and Distrust of the Divine Goodness, is as much our Weakness as our Crime.—Such a Behaviour is not only a Breach of the Divine Laws, but likewise argues so great a Narrowness and Meanness of Spirit, as is even a Reproach to human Nature, and implies as great a Want of a manly Resolution and Constancy, as of Piety. For the Mind of Man was endowed with superior Faculties and Powers, to enable him to judge aright of the real Differences of Things, and to govern himself by the Dictates of that Judgment. His Reason was given him to make him capable of weighing every Circumstance, and not suffer himself to be deceived by the Appearances of Things; but to teach him to take a View of his Condition in every Light, and to give every Consideration its due Weight and Force. Which is so little done by him, who indulges an excessive Grief,

that his Reaſon becomes a Curſe and not a Bleſſing to him, by being inſtrumental in collecting every Thing that may increaſe his Sorrows, and in overlooking every Motive to leſſen or allay them.

He is very faithful in neglecting no Circumſtance that may add to the Darkneſs and Gloom of the Proſpect; and is as induſtrious in ſhutting out every Ray of Light that might break in upon it, and enliven it. He ſuffers Prejudice and Partiality to overcome him; and inſtead of being an equitable Judge of his own Caſe, will be content only to view himſelf in thoſe falſe Colours, in which his Paſſions repreſent him.—And whilſt he is complaining of the Greatneſs of his Affliction, and ſcruples no Means of extricating himſelf from it; he is weak enough to be at the very Inſtant adding to its Weight, and purſuing the Methods that can only tend both to magnify his Misfortunes, and increaſe them. And ſuch a Behaviour does then offer as great Violence to common Senſe as it does to Religion; and is as great a Reproach of our human Nature as of our Chriſtianity; ſince it demonſtrates, that ſuch Men are governed by their Paſ-

ſions,

ſions, and not by their Underſtanding; and that they are weak enough to make great Complaints of the Grievances they labour under, and yet at the ſame Time to take a great deal of Pains to add to the Weight and Uneaſineſs of them.

One Proof then, that Dejection and Diſtruſt are our Infirmity, our Weakneſs, and our Folly, is this; that they ſhew us to be wholly governed by our Paſſions, and not by our Reaſon. The Paſſions are ſtrong and active, mightily incline the Mind to, or againſt, any Object; and when we inconſiderately throw up the Reins to them, they muſt be irrational, either with Regard to their Object or Degree. They were, I doubt not, in Man's primitive State, in perfect Subjection to the Laws of Reaſon; and they are ſtill deſigned as Spurs and Incentives to the more ready Execution and avoiding of ſuch Things, as the Underſtanding ſhall approve or condemn. And the Pleaſure and Pain annexed to the Purſuit of them, are evident Motives to that Good, which a wiſe Man ſhould chooſe, and Diſſuaſives from that Evil, which he ſhould avoid.—So that the Order of Nature is in

itſelf

itself just and good, and The Author of it Wise and Beneficent to us; and as long as we preserve the Subordination He designed in it, we shall find every Faculty to have its peculiar Excellences and Uses, and to contribute its Part towards the Promotion of that Perfection and Happiness, for which He adapted and designed it.

But when, instead of Order, we introduce Confusion; instead of Peace, Rebellion; when, instead of governing our Passions, we are governed by them, and that in Defiance of the Dictates of our Understanding; we then become the Authors of our own Destruction, and are justly chargeable with the Sufferings we endure; we betray our Weakness by submitting to be directed by the least rational Part of us; and in laying aside our Reason, we relinquish both our Manhood and our Peace.—For the Passions, if not duly regulated, will naturally hurry and confound us; their Representations of Things to the Mind are bigger than the Life, and by too strong and sensible Impressions they will cause us to err as much in Judgment as in Practice.—Which is the particular Case of every one, whose ex-

extraordinary Fears of future Misfortunes, or whose inordinate Grief at present Calamities, hurry them into Melancholy and Dejection. Such a one is partial to his own Misfortunes; he considers himself only in one, and that the worst Light, in which Passion or Prepossession can represent him. He aggravates every Circumstance which appears grievous to him; and neglects the Consideration of the good Things he enjoys, which, if duly and equitably weighed, might remove, or at least diminish, his Anguish. And then, from this imperfect View of one Side only of his Case, he draws such melancholy Inferences concerning his present and future State, as are as little agreeable to Reason as Religion.—He suffers himself to be swallowed up in one continued Train of gloomy and horrible Reflections; and these Reflections cast a dark Veil over all his Faculties, and will not suffer him to see any Thing as it is, but only in that dark and uncomfortable Light, in which they are thus disguised and misrepresented.—And with Reason then does such a Case deserve the Name of great *Infirmity*; when the

the nobleſt Faculties of the Mind are thus clouded and obſcured.

And as Dejection is thus manifeſtly a Weakneſs, as it argues a Suſpenſion of Reaſon; ſo is it likewiſe, as it ſhews the want of a manly Reſolution and Conſtancy. To be able at once to look both backwards and forwards, to take ſome View of paſt and future Events, and to judge of the diſtant Conſequences and Effects of Things, is the peculiar Privilege of human Nature. And the Advantage of it is, that it prevents our being deceived by Appearances, and enables us to ſee thro' and deſpiſe thoſe ſeeming Goods and Evils of Life, which are but too apt to engroſs our ſeveral Affections, and would otherwiſe delude us.—And this ſhould then raiſe in us a light Eſteem of ſuperficial Advantages, and ſuch a Conſtancy in enduring ſuch preſent Sufferings, as we know will terminate in the Happineſs of another State.

And whoever, on the contrary, gives way to his Misfortunes, and ſuffers an exceſſive Grief to make him deſperate under them, betrays a Weakneſs unworthy of his Nature, and appears in a Character, which no one would willingly aſſume. He acts

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the Coward to the worſt Purpoſes, in fooliſhly fearing, either what perhaps will not be, or what he cannot prevent. For tho' it be much celebrated, as an Inſtance of *Roman* Bravery, to end Life and Misfortunes together; yet, ſurely, true Magnanimity conſiſts, not in this flying from Misfortunes, but in bravely enduring and ſubduing them. When Mens Circumſtances are ſo calamitous, that they can with Reaſon look upon Death, as on a Releaſe from Torments; it is then their Intereſt, or their Fear, and not their Courage, that makes them court it; and he only is truly brave in ſuch Circumſtances, who reſolves to bear up againſt them with Conſtancy, and neither be terrified nor depreſſed.—And in this therefore the chriſtian does moſt eminently excel the heathen Morality, in that it requires us to prefer the Croſs even to the Glories of the World, whenever our Duty ſhall demand it; and in that it commands us to bear up ſteadily under Calamities, of whatever kind, and to *wait with Patience, till our Change cometh.*

What has been ſaid, ſhews the Weakneſs of a melancholy and dejected Spirit, as it is a Want

a Want both of Reaſon and of Courage. And that ſuch Sorrow is our Folly, as well as Infirmity, will farther appear, if it be remembered, that by indulging it we do not alleviate our Miſery, but increaſe it. Every Reflection of this kind increaſes Terror; and either by fanciful Aggravations of what we ſuffer, or by a real Suppreſſion of our Spirits, we both make the Evil greater than it is, and render the Mind leſs able to ſupport it.—The melancholy and dejected Man induſtriouſly ſeeks his own Miſery. He takes a great deal of Pains to give every Circumſtance its worſt Turn, and will indulge himſelf in no Reflection, but that of his being deſolate and abandoned. He forgets at once the Good that he has, does, or may yet enjoy; he forgets the Goodneſs and Power of his God to deliver him; and is ever muſing on the horrible Connexion between Guilt and Puniſhment, without enlivening his Proſpect with the comfortable Conſideration of the Divine Promiſes, or the Efficacy of Faith and Repentance. Not one Ray of Light is ſuffered to break in; not one Thought, and hardly the leaſt Hope, of Eaſe and Refreſhment to prevail. And therefore

fore at every Inſtant he but multiplies Sorrow, and increaſes Guilt.

And what a Complication is there then of Guilt, Folly, and Miſery, in this Character? How fooliſh is he to increaſe the Miſfortunes he complains of? how guilty, to diſtruſt his God, the Strength of his Confidence? and how wretched, to live amidſt the agonizing Terrors of a deſpairing Mind?

And though this be moſt eminently the Caſe, when the Cauſe of ſuch Melancholy is, or is ſuppoſed to be, of a ſpiritual Nature; yet with regard to temporal Occaſions alſo, it is properly, in ſome Meaſure, the ſame. For what but Madneſs and Diſtraction of Mind can drive wretched Men to ſuch Extremities, as are too frequently heard of; even to be their own Executioners, to ruſh adventurouſly and unthinkingly into Eternity, and to attain an imaginary ending of their preſent Troubles, which at the worſt are comparatively ſmall and ſhort, in Defiance of unſpeakable and eternal Torments? And therefore it highly behoves every one, whoſe Afflictions lye hard upon him, to rouze himſelf, and exert a Chriſtian Conſtancy and Courage: It behoves

behoves him, as he values his endless Happiness, not to indulge the discouraging Suggestions of an afflicted Spirit: It behoves him, as a Man, to shew, that he has too much Reason, to be led on blindly by his Passions, and too much Bravery, to be brought into Subjection to his Fears and Apprehensions: And as a Christian, it behoves him to have a sure Dependance upon his God, and to resolve to imitate the Constancy and Patience of his Blessed Redeemer, Who *was made perfect through Sufferings.*— Which, if he would do, he has a certain and powerful Support within his own Reach; let him *remember the Years of the Right Hand of The Most Highest.* Which leads me to consider the

II. Second Particular, which is, that the most proper Means to overcome the Infirmity, and conquer the Folly, we have been speaking of, is to reflect on the Divine Nature and Dispensations, and to recollect the many ordinary and extraordinary Instances of God's Mercy, which have appeared, and daily do appear, in the Course of His Providence.

And

And this is a Review, ſo very entertaining and ſatisfactory, that it is hard to account for the Neglect of it. Eſpecially in Caſes of Diſtreſs, which more immediately require ſuch a Recollection, it carries its own Motives and Engagements with it. To reflect on God, is to reflect on an inexhauſtible Fund of Mercy and Goodneſs; and to meditate on His Providence, is to conſider the many Inſtances He has ſhewn of it to Mankind, from the Beginning of Time. In theſe Thoughts, every uneaſy Reflection may find its Lenitive, every Wound here meet with its Cure. What Difficulties are ſo great, as that God cannot extricate us from them? Or what Pains are ſo intenſe, that He cannot remove them? And as to His Will, what Deliverances has He not often wrought (I mean even in the ordinary Diſpenſations of His Providence) for His faithful Servants? And what Deliverances has He not promiſed to work out for thoſe who ſubmit to His Will, or rely upon Him?

A pious Recollection of what is paſt would give Men a grateful Senſe of God's

Goodneſs, and a firm Confidence in His future Mercy. But the Misfortune is, that when Afflictions come, the Dejected are often ſo entirely taken up with the preſent unhappy Moment, as to have no Regard either to the paſt or future. Though it is both their Duty and their Intereſt to conſider both, and to ſet the endearing Remembrance of the one, againſt the diſcouraging Proſpect of the other.—For, I believe, it would be very difficult to find a Man ſo compleatly wretched, but that, upon a ſerious Review of his paſt Life, he will acknowledge, that he has received many ſignal Mercies. And if this be the Caſe, why ſhould he now think himſelf abandoned, unleſs he abandons himſelf? Why ſhould he ſeem to imagine, that The Almighty's *Hand is ſhortened, that it cannot ſave?* Would he, with the Pſalmiſt, *remember the Works of The Lord, and be talking of His Doings*; theſe would give him a very different View of things, and furniſh a Remedy for every Weakneſs and Folly in which his Dejection may involve and plunge him. They would convince him, in what very

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falſe Lights his Paſſions diſguiſe his Circumſtances, and direct him how to form a right Judgment of them. They would give him a Bravery and Conſtancy, not to be overcome by the moſt preſſing Calamities, and would afford him a Taſte of the enlivening Comforts of a Dependance on His God. Again,

To reflect on The Supreme Being is the proper Means to cure us of our unreaſonable Apprehenſions; becauſe it refers to Him, Who cannot rejoice in our Afflictions. It were Blaſphemy to imagine, that He, Who is Goodneſs and Compaſſion Itſelf, can delight in the Miſery of His Creatures; and we know His End in exerciſing Judgment is their Reformation and Happineſs. We know, that our ſincere, though late Repentance, will not be rejected, and that all, who faithfully come unto Him, will be graciouſly received. And this ought to remove all Diſtruſt and Melancholy, and plainly leads to a firm Hope and Dependance upon Him. It naturally tends to inſpirit Men with the Reſolutions and Confidence of the Pſalmiſt, and teaches them to fly to The

Almighty for Refuge in the Day of Trouble, and to reſt aſſured, that under His Wings they ſhall be ſafe, until the preſent Difficulties *are overpaſt*.

And theſe Reflections are the beſt Ways of raiſing our Spirits, and animating us with true and laſting Fortitude; becauſe they refer us to Him, Who both can, and, if we rely upon Him, will ſo ſupport us, as ſhall turn moſt to our Happineſs, on the whole Account. Inſtances have been often ſeen of ſuch, as have exerted themſelves beyond their Strength, and ſurmounted Difficulties, which they could not otherwiſe have ſtruggled with, through a Confidence, that they ſhould be aſſiſted by inviſible Powers. Such a Confidence naturally ſpurs to Action, and abhors the Reproach of being wanting to ourſelves, when we know, that, unleſs we are ſo, we ſhall conquer. For, *is any thing too hard for The* Almighty? Aſſuredly, in due Time, He will bring Deliverance and Salvation to His Servants, and in the mean while ſtrengthen and enable them to undergo their Hardſhips. And great therefore ſhould be their Courage and Firmneſs of Mind,

Mind, who know, that their own Folly ſhall be rectified by His Wiſdom, and their Weakneſs by His Power.

Laſtly, Conſiderations on *the Years of the Right Hand of The Moſt Higheſt* would convince the Afflicted of the Folly of giving way to Grief, by experimental Proofs of the Comforts they bring with them. Gleams of Light cannot but break in upon us, as oft as Infinite Goodneſs is the Subject of our Meditations. A firm Faith in ſuch a Being muſt be always attended with Joy and Satisfaction to a dependent Creature, even in the midſt of his Proſperity. Then it will be neceſſary to aſſure him of the Continuance, if not of the Increaſe of his Happineſs. But in Affliction, Men will find ſure Refuge and Conſolation here, when all other Reliefs have forſaken them. For a while at leaſt, they will be taught to forget their Misfortunes; and look through them, with *Hopes full of Immortality*.

The Moments ſpent in recollecting God's Mercies, the moſt delightful Subject which can employ the Heart, will be ſo much Time taken off from Sorrow and Lamentation;

tation; and will open such a Scene of Transport, as will be both pleasing and astonishing, and force us to hope, even tho' against Hope. For this will discover to us a very probable Connection between past and future Comforts; it will teach him to infer, that He, Who from Inherent Goodness only has been gracious, will be gracious still, and that He, Who has been thus merciful, will yet shew Mercy.

We might pursue this Chain of thinking; and apply it to every particular Folly or Weakness, that overmuch Sorrow can in any Circumstances occasion; and shew, that the Contemplation of The Divine Nature and Providence is most proper to employ and refresh the Mind on every melancholy Occasion.—But the Time would fail me to be thus particular; and I must therefore leave the pleasing Subject to every one's private Meditations, who, whether in Distresses or not, have any Mind to judge aright of Things, and truly to enjoy themselves.

And I shall therefore conclude with that strong and lively Representation of God's Goodness to His Servants, which He Himself

ſelf gives us by His Prophet *Iſaiah*, in theſe moſt comprehenſive, moſt enlivening, and moſt pathetic Terms: *Can a Woman forget her ſucking Child, that ſhe ſhould not have Compaſſion on the Son of her Womb? Yea, they may forget: yet will I not forget Thee.*

FINIS.

ERRATA.

Page 84.	line 18.	for *all* read *most of*.
208.	16.	for *these* read *our Iniquities*.
232.	12.	for *or* read *of*.
256.	17.	for *merit* read *inflict*.
261.	22.	for *even* read *almost*.
278.	8.	dele *that*.
296.	21.	read *laying on of Hands*.
300.	2.	for *Cases* read *Case*.
323.	8.	read *Conversation*. *Jesus Christ The*
381.	7.	for *this* read *thus*.

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